CLASSIC POP™

eighties electronic eclectic

+

EXCLUSIVE

BRYAN FERRY WRITES FOR CP!

HIS TRACK-BY-TRACK GUIDE TO ROXY MUSIC

BLONDIE

DEBBIE HARRY, CHRIS STEIN & CLEM BURKE ON THE SECRET OF POP SUCCESS

"TENSION AND CHAOS KEEPS PEOPLE ON THEIR TOES!"

CLASSIC ALBUM

MUSIC FOR THE MASSES
DEPECHE MODE

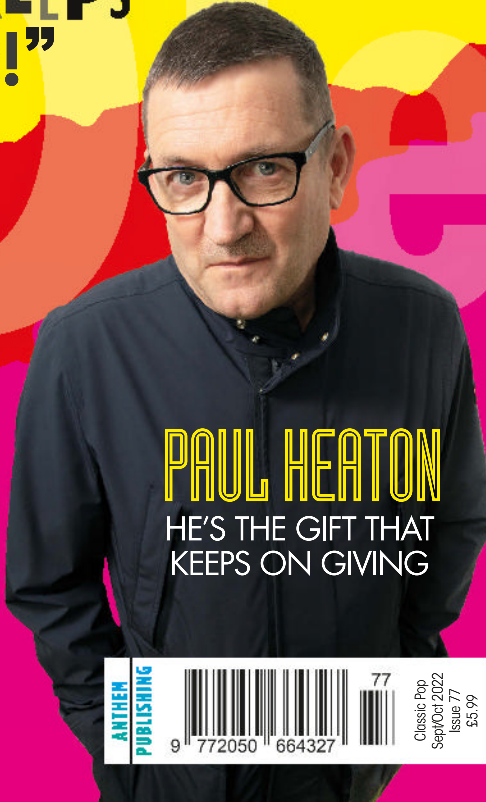
EXCLUSIVE

WILLIAM ORBIT RETURNS

MADONNA, PINK, BRITNEY? "I'M A POP TART FOR DIVAS!"

+

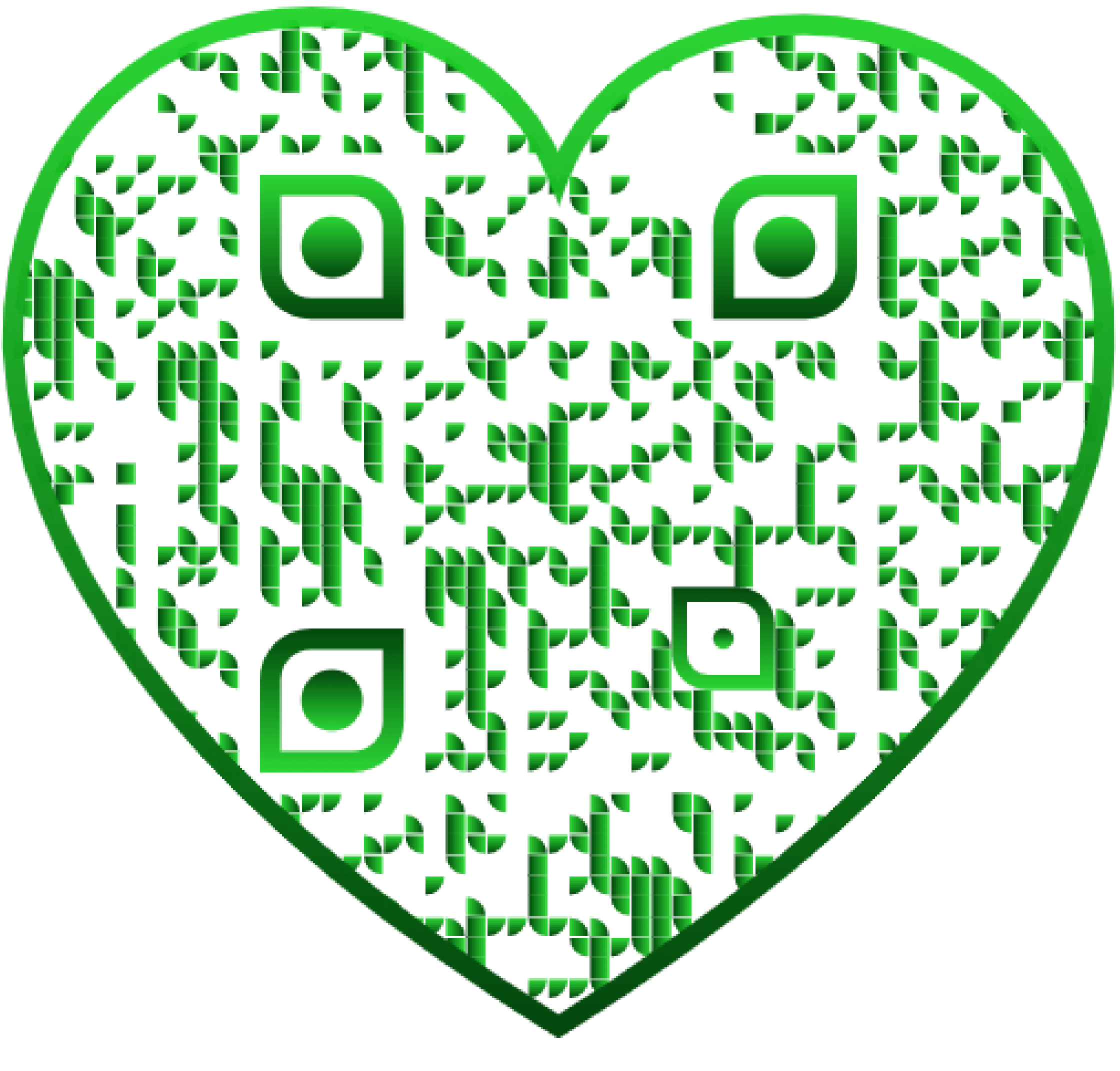
LEVEL 42 • GIORGIO MORODER
THE PROCLAIMERS • IT BITES
RICKY ROSS • HOWARD JONES
ALPHAVILLE • AND MORE...



PAUL HEATON

HE'S THE GIFT THAT KEEPS ON GIVING

ANTHEM PUBLISHING
9 772050 664327 77
Classic Pop Sept/Oct 2022 Issue 77 £5.99



NOW YEARBOOK '79

09.09.22

3-LP / 4-CD / 4-CD SPECIAL EDITION

CLASSIC POP

WELCOME

They say that good things come to those who wait – and that's certainly true when it comes to the much-anticipated new Blondie boxset. It's been on our radar for the best part of four years and we've been checking in constantly with the band's label like an impatient kid in the backseat on a particularly long family road trip ("Are we there yet!?").

The reason for our fevered excitement is obvious. Blondie are, after all, the kind of band that are the living embodiment of the *Classic Pop* ethos – a little bit of what you fancy does you good. They might have sprung from New York's very insular CBGB scene but this was an outfit who defiantly looked outwards and delighted in skipping across genres with wild abandon. Pop was at their very core but over the years they've dipped into everything from new wave, punk and disco to reggae and hip-hop.

Such is the dominance of their iconic frontwoman Debbie Harry on their brand that it's easy to overlook the musicality of the rest of her bandmates. Pointedly, Chris Stein used to wear a t-shirt emblazoned with the logo 'Blondie Is A Group!'. We have every sympathy, Chris. Imagine trying to assert your own identity in a band when your lead singer is so iconic that she becomes immortalised in an Andy Warhol portrait.

Blondie's delicate chemistry has endured down the years, though, so as we talk to Debbie, Chris and Clem Burke for this issue's in-depth cover feature about their storied history we simultaneously catch the group in the first flush of laying down ideas in the recording studio for their next album. Tantalisingly, perhaps the best is yet to come (and, fingers crossed we won't have to wait four years for its release).

Elsewhere, I'm delighted that we can welcome back William Orbit into these pages who returns with *The Painter* – our Album of the Issue, no less – plus we catch up with national treasures Paul Heaton and The Proclaimers, who reveal all about their politically-charged new material.

And there's also the no small matter of our one-off Galáctico signing on the writing front to appraise you of. You might just have heard of him: nice vibrato, looks good in a suit. Yes, Bryan Ferry personally takes us through Roxy Music's career-spanning *Best Of* compilation that has made it to vinyl for the first time to tie in with the band's 50th anniversary. Impeccable spelling, decent grammar – that lad will go far...

Enjoy the issue!

Steve Harnell, Editor
Follow me on Twitter: @steve_harnell

77

@ClassicPopMag

Spotify
LISTEN NOW

SUBSCRIBE

Subscribe to *Classic Pop* now and you'll receive a special Blondie collectable cover. These stripped-back designs dispense with the usual coverlines and make the most of our stunning artist imagery. Turn to page 8 for details about how to subscribe and our latest reader offer.

CLASSIC POP

CONTENTS

© Getty

FEATURES

BLONDIE 24
With the long-awaited arrival of their (giant) retrospective boxset, Debbie Harry, Chris Stein and Clem Burke charm John Earls with tales of 70s New York, internal chaos and the true punk spirit – plus some tantalising tidbits on their upcoming new album

CLASSIC ALBUM 32
35 years on, *Classic Pop* returns to *Music For The Masses*, Depeche Mode's game-changing LP

WILLIAM ORBIT 38
We meet the genre-crossing producer to discuss past glories, his emergence from the wilderness and sparkling new collection, *The Painter*

ALBUM BY ALBUM 44
A deep dive into the back catalogue of Level 42

THE PROCLAIMERS 48
The Reid brothers on feisty form for new record *Dentures Out*

TRACK BY TRACK 52
Bryan Ferry takes us through the band's career via *The Best Of Roxy Music*

PAUL HEATON 54
60 this year and with his most politicised studio album for some time, we catch up with the most generous man in pop

FORGET ME NOTS 60
An underrated classic from Cumbrian prog-rock-pop fusionists It Bites

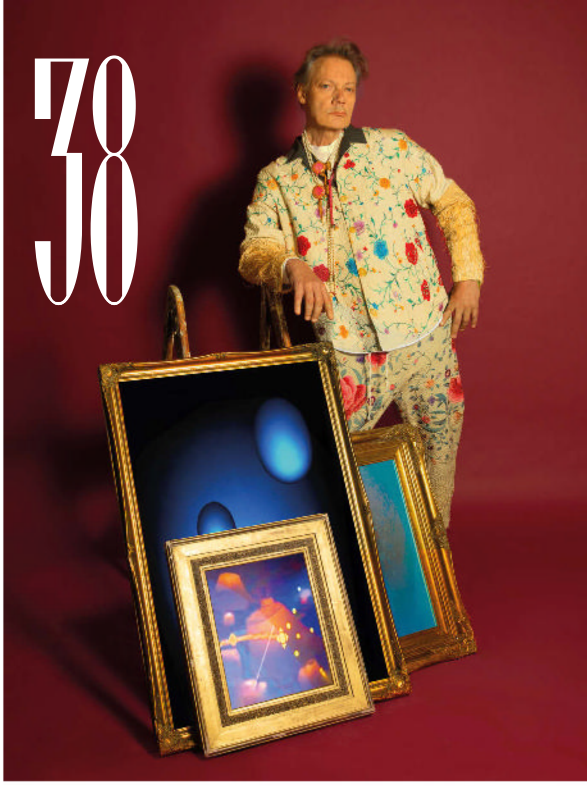
RICKY ROSS 64
Deacon Blue's frontman walks on with a reflective new album and memoir

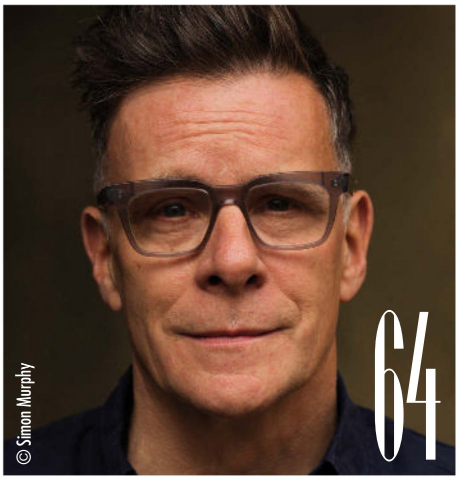
POPSCENE: YACHT ROCK 68
Make-out music for millionaires?

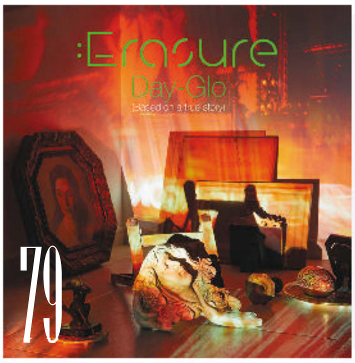
TOP 20: GIORGIO MORODER 72
CP curates the finest waxings from the undisputed master of electronic disco

NEWS

POP-UP 10
Duran open the Commonwealth Games, the Queen of Pop in control, The Cure toast a classic album, plus John Hughes, Soft Cell, Tom Bailey







and our tributes to the departed Olivia Newton-John and Paul Ryder

Q+A: ALPHAVILLE 12
Marian Gold's orchestral venture

Q+A: HOWARD JONES 16
From his new LP to life after *Stranger Things* – we meet the electro-pop icon

A TO Z OF POP 20
TV themes that provided pop gems

REGULARS

THIS MONTH IN POP 22
Musical happenings in September '82

POPARAZZI 58
Your photos with pop favourites

TOP 10: 6 SEPTEMBER 1987 62
Rick Astley, Fat Boys, PSB and Dusty, U2, Cliff, Wet Wet Wet and more

SUPERFAN 70
Pethead and collector Olman Aguilar

CLASSIC POP MOMENT 98
Kate Bush's experimental fourth LP

REVIEWS

THE HOT LIST 78
Happy Mondays, Brian Eno, Bowie, Embrace and Kasabian

NEW ALBUMS 79
Erasure, Paul Heaton & Jacqui Abbott, William Orbit, Robbie Williams, Howard Jones, Beth Orton, The Proclaimers, Blancmange, Mark Owen, Lightning Seeds, Oliver Sim, Suede, Yungblud, Phil Thornalley, Richard Marx, Julian Lennon, Ricky Ross, The House Of Love, Tim Burgess, Yeah Yeah Yeahs and Ezra Furman

REISSUES 86
Blondie, Ultravox, The Cure, Duran Duran, NOW, Shakespears Sister, The Communards, Alphaville, Sheena Easton, David Sylvian, Toyah, Roxy Music, Matt Bianco, The Finn Brothers, The Bluetones, Beastie Boys, Paula Abdul, Madness, Arrow, Paul Weller and Space

LIVE 94
Let's Rock lands in Shrewsbury

BOOKS 96
Abba At 50 by Carl Magnus Palm; *Electronically Yours: Vol.1* by Martyn Ware; *Glam! When Superstars Rocked The World, 1970-74* by Mark Paytress; *Bowie @ 75* by Martin Popoff

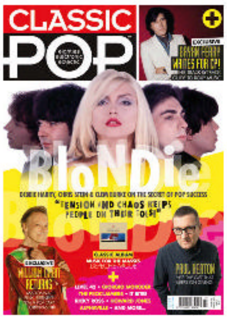
FOLLOW US
@ClassicPopMag

Spotify
LISTEN NOW

SUBSCRIBE
TO CLASSIC POP
+ SAVE CASH
PAGE 8

CLASSIC POP WHO'S WHO

77



Anthem Publishing
Suite 6, Piccadilly House,
London Road, Bath, BA1 6PL
Tel +44 (0)1225 489 984
www.classicpopmag.com

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE BLONDIE SONG?

EDITOR
Steve Harnell
steve.harnell@anthem.co.uk
Hanging On The Telephone

ART EDITOR
Debra Butler
debra.butler@anthem.co.uk
Picture This

ADVERTISING MANAGER
Leah Fitz-Henry
leah.fitz-henry@anthem.co.uk
One Way Or Another

SUB-EDITOR
Rik Flynn
Union City Blue

DIGITAL EDITOR
Steve O'Brien
Rapture *1

CREATIVE DIRECTOR
Jenny Cook
jenny.cook@anthem.co.uk
Rapture

MARKETING EXECUTIVE
Rosie Pankhurst
rosie.pankhurst@anthem.co.uk
Maria

FOUNDER, EDITOR-AT-LARGE
Ian Peel
Rapture (Special Disco Mix)

CONTRIBUTORS
John Earls
Call Me *2
Dave Freak
Call Me *3
Paul Kirkley
Atomic
Mark Lindores
Rapture *4
Jon O'Brien
Good Boys *5
Barry Page
Denis *6
Matt Phillips
Picture This
Felix Rowe
No Exit
Matthew Rudd
Sunday Girl
Will Simpson
Dreaming *7
Ian Wade
Rapture
Wyndham Wallace
Heart Of Glass
Annie Zaleski
Atomic *8

CEO **Jon Bickley**
jon.bickley@anthem.co.uk
Will Anything Happen?

MANAGING DIRECTOR **Simon Lewis**
simon.lewis@anthem.co.uk
Rip Her To Shreds

SOUNDBITES

*1 "This really doesn't get enough credit for popularising hip-hop in the early 80s. It wasn't just about the Sugarhill Gang and Grandmaster Flash."

*2 "The fact Blondie made such a mighty song for *American Gigolo*, rather than put it on any album, shows just how much great pop they were knocking out on a weekly basis."

*3 "A driving mash-up of New York City New Wave and Italo Disco with a great Debs vocal."

*4 "The soundtrack to one of my favourite ever memories – Debbie Harry high-fiving me for rapping the "Fab 5 Freddie…" part back to her verbatim from the front row of a Blondie gig."

*5 "A latter-day Blondie hit that is even better than *Maria*."

*6 "Debbie's silky-smooth vocals and splash of French take the song to a whole new level."

*7 "Notable for a thunderous performance by Clem Burke and its beautifully quaint lyrical reference to tea drinking."

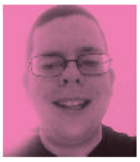
*8 "Sinister post-disco grooves and waterfalling harmonies combine for peak dancefloor bliss."

ANTHEM | PUBLISHING PPA

All content copyright Anthem Publishing Ltd 2022, all rights reserved. While we make every effort to ensure the factual content of *Classic Pop* magazine is correct, we cannot take any responsibility nor be held accountable for any factual errors printed. Please make every effort to check quoted prices and product specifications with manufacturers prior to purchase. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or resold without prior consent of Anthem Publishing Ltd. *Classic Pop* magazine recognises all copyrights contained within the issue. Where possible, we acknowledge the copyright holder. All paper used in this publication comes from responsibly managed forests.

FSC www.fsc.org MIX Paper from responsible sources FSC® C013669

OUR CONTRIBUTORS



The winner of the Best Writer – Specialist category in this year's British Society of Magazine Editors Awards, for our latest issue **John Earls** catches up with Blondie's Debbie Harry, Chris Stein and Clem Burke for our cover feature, meets William Orbit plus oversees our new albums and reissues reviews sections.

Steve O'Brien has interviewed everyone from Angelina Jolie to Keith Chegwin and written for such publications as *The Guardian* and *Radio Times*. For *Classic Pop*, he talks to Paul Heaton about his recent 60th birthday celebrations and new studio album with Jacqui Abbott, *N.K-Pop*. He also takes to the waves for our instant guide to yacht rock.

Matt Phillips is a regular contributor to *Classic Pop* and provider of this month's Forget Me Nots feature on It Bites' underrated second LP *Once Around The World* as well as Level 42's entire studio output for our latest in-depth Album By Album piece. His first book *Level 42: Every Album, Every Song* was published in 2021 and he records music under the name mattjoplin.

SUBSCRIPTION ENQUIRIES **0844 8560642** (Calls cost 7 pence per minute plus your phone company's access charge) or +44 (0)1371 853609 *shop@anthem.co.uk* PRINTING **William Gibbons & Son** *Tel* +44 (0)1902 730011 DISTRIBUTION **Marketforce (UK) Ltd** 161 Marsh Wall, London, UK, E14 9AP *Tel* +44 (0) 20 378 79001 LICENSING ENQUIRIES **Regina Erak** Tel +44 (0)7753 811622 *regina.erak@gmail.com*

HOT CHIP

FREAKOUT/RELEASE

THE NEW ALBUM / OUT NOW

CLASSIC POP
eighties electronic eclectic

SUBSCRIBE FOR JUST 99P

TRY A SUBSCRIPTION TO CLASSIC POP AND GET YOUR FIRST ISSUE FOR LESS THAN £1

Reasons to Subscribe

- Receive every issue of the magazine sent straight to your door and your device
- Get access to our current issue digitally as soon as you subscribe
- Discover every issue ever published in our digital magazine archive
- Receive exclusive subscriber-only covers to add to your collection
- Save an exclusive 10% on any past issue or special issue of Classic Pop Presents
- Get all the latest music news, reviews, and updates in your email inbox weekly

3 EASY WAYS TO SUBSCRIBE

classicpopmag.com/autumn22

01371 853 609

QUOTE CODE SS22CLPP

Open the camera on your phone, frame this QR code, and follow the instructions on your screen

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Trial price is available to UK subscribers paying by Direct Debit, continuous card payment, or PayPal. Savings are calculated from the local cover price of the magazine. After the first issue, price will step-up to £11.99 every 6 months for print & digital subscriptions, or £10.75 every 6 months for digital-only subscriptions. There are 6 issues of Classic Pop published in a year and your subscription will start with the next available issue. Offer code: SS22CLPP. Offer ends: 31 October 2022.

KILIMANJARO PRESENTS

TICKETS AVAILABLE AT my

© Getty

Soft Cell reunion gig will get album and DVD release

Soft Cell have a new live album and DVD on the way to celebrate last year's acclaimed reunion shows.

Released on 7 October via LiveHereNow, *Non-Stop Erotic Cabaret… And Other Stories: Live* was captured in November 2021 at one of Soft Cell's sell-out concerts at London's Hammersmith Apollo to mark the 40th anniversary of *Non-Stop Erotic Cabaret*.

The shows, which were staged in two acts, saw the duo's iconic 1981 debut album performed in full for the very first time, plus a further career-spanning collection and cuts from their then-unreleased latest long-player, **Happiness Not Included*. Joining Marc Almond and Dave Ball on stage for the two-and-a-half hour gigs were saxophonist Gary Barnacle and four backing singers.

As well as the initial CD and DVD options, further vinyl formats are expected to follow in Spring 2023. Visit softcell.co.uk for more details on format options.

Tom Bailey to revisit iconic Thompson Twins LP on stage

Tom Bailey is set to dip into his back catalogue to play Thompson Twins' classic 1984 album *Into The Gap* in its entirety for the first time during an exclusive one-off appearance in Buckinghamshire.

Bailey will revisit the LP that featured the Top 5 hit singles *Doctor! Doctor!*, *You Take Me Up* and *Hold Me Now* for the gig at Aylesbury's Waterside Theatre on 3 September for a set that will also include further Thompson Twins favourites and selections from Bailey's 2018 solo LP, *Science Fiction*.

Tickets are priced between £29 and £40 and available via ATG Tickets, See Tickets and Ticketmaster or by phoning 0844 871 7607. Support for the show comes from Blancmange.

Duran Duran play for a worldwide audience of more than one billion at the opening ceremony of the 2022 Commonwealth Games

JOHN HUGHES BOXSET COMPILES 80s CLASSICS

Movie soundtrack fans will have the chance to get their hands on the first official compilation of music from the filmmaker John Hughes.

Curated by the director's music supervisor Tarquin Gotch and covering 1983 to 1989, the 74-track 4CD boxset *Life Moves Pretty Fast* will be released on 11 November via Demon/Edsel.

Hughes' extensive use of pop and rock in his movies revolutionised the way Hollywood incorporated music on the big screen. The collection effectively operates as a who's who of 80s pop, rock and indie, from the acclaimed likes of New Order, Kate Bush and Simple Minds to cult artists including Oingo Boingo, Dr Calculus, Gene Loves Jezebel and Belouis Some. Hughes' son James gave an insight into his father's relationship with music: "[The boxset] serves as a reminder not just to the musicians John championed in the 80s, but to how intensely his search for music expanded beyond this era. Until his final days, he was still collecting huge amounts of music from around the world, galaxies removed from the New Romantic and new wave sounds that, to many, still define him."

Gotch was one of John's closest collaborators: "Back when we were working on these movie soundtracks, the best way to send music around the world was cassettes by Fedex," he explains. "We sent John cassettes of newly-released music, of demos, of just finished mixes and in return he would send VHS videos of the scenes that needed music. John said he only made movies so that he could choose what music to put in them, so as his success at the box office grew, the number of tracks in his films, by up-and-coming UK bands, steadily increased."

Life Moves Pretty Fast – The John Hughes Mixtapes, is released as a limited edition boxset and will include a 14-track cassette and reissue of the 7" single, *Beat City/I'm Afraid*, originally sent to the John Hughes fan club mailing list upon the release of *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*. Also available is a limited-edition red vinyl 6LP boxset, a 25-track black vinyl 2LP version and standard 4CD 74-track set.

© Getty

BIRMINGHAM'S LEGENDS SHINE AT COMMONWEALTH GAMES SHOWS

Duran Duran have played a headline performance slot at the spectacular opening ceremony in their home city of Birmingham for the 22nd Commonwealth Games, the biggest sporting event held in the UK since the London Olympics of 2012.

Staged at the rebuilt Alexander Stadium in Perry Barr in front of a 30,000-strong crowd and a worldwide television audience of more than one billion, the band played a four-song set on 28 July comprising *Save A Prayer*, *Planet Earth*, *Tonight United* and *Ordinary World*. The opening festivities to the Games also included guitarist Tony Iommi and acclaimed saxophonist Soweto Kinch. Meanwhile, the Commonwealth Games closing ceremony on 8 August featured a second performance by Iommi alongside a surprise appearance by Ozzy Osbourne as the pair reunited to play Black Sabbath's *Paranoid*. Other artists on the bill included Dexys Midnight Runners, Apache Indian, Musical Youth, The Selecter, UB40 and Panjabi MC.

Duran Duran's performance was a continuation of a hugely successful year for the band which also saw them play for 70,000 fans at Buckingham Palace for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations. Their most recent studio album, *Future Past*, peaked at No.3 in the UK, their highest chart placing since 2004's *Astronaut*. On 5 November, the band will also be inducted into the coveted Rock and Roll Hall of Fame at the Microsoft Theater in Los Angeles. It's been reported that the fourpiece will reunite with former bandmates Andy Taylor and Warren Cuccurullo for the induction ceremony.

OBITUARY **OLIVIA NEWTON-JOHN**

(1948-2022)

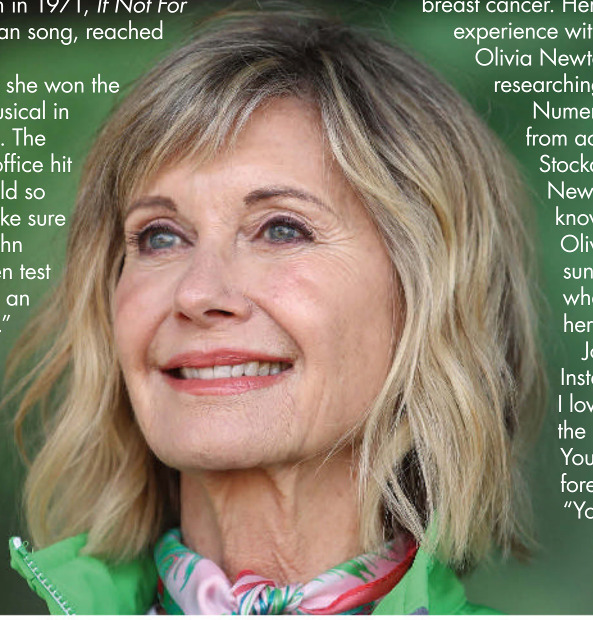
As *Classic Pop* went to press, news broke that much-loved *Grease* star Dame Olivia Newton-John had died at the age of 73. The singer's husband, John Easterling, said she "passed away peacefully at her ranch in southern California this morning [8 August], surrounded by family and friends".

Born in Cambridge in 1948, Newton-John moved with her family to Australia in 1954. Her Welsh father, Brinley Newton-John, had been a British spy during World War 2, while her mother, Irene Helene, was the daughter of the German Nobel laureate, Max Born.

Newton-John released her first album in 1971, *If Not For You*. Its title track, a cover of a Bob Dylan song, reached No.7 in the UK.

It was in 1978, at the age of 29, that she won the role of Sandy in *Grease*, the 50s-set musical in which she co-starred with John Travolta. The movie would become the biggest box-office hit of that year. "I was worried I was too old so I asked if I could do a screen test to make sure I looked appropriate," she said. "But John wanted me for the role and in the screen test it really worked between us. There was an attraction that kept the chemistry going."

Through the film, Newton-John reached No.1 in the UK with the songs *You're The One That I Want* and *Summer Nights*, and No.2 with *Hopelessly Devoted To You*. The 2LP soundtrack for the film has since been certified 8x platinum in the UK.


© Getty

A string of solo hits followed, including the chart-topping *Xanadu* (with ELO) and *Physical* which reached UK No.7.

In 1992, Newton-John was diagnosed with breast cancer. She recovered, however, and went on to become a leading advocate for cancer research via her charity, the Olivia Newton-John Foundation. Her efforts were recognised in 2020 when the Queen honoured her with a damehood. Newton-John's cancer returned in 2017 and it was announced that she was undergoing a course of photon radiation treatment. In a statement, her husband hailed the singer as "a symbol of triumphs and hope for over 30 years sharing her journey with breast cancer. Her healing inspiration and pioneering experience with plant medicine continues with the Olivia Newton-John Foundation Fund, dedicated to researching plant medicine and cancer."

Numerous heartfelt tributes have been paid from across the entertainment industry. Actress Stockard Channing, who starred alongside Newton-John as Rizzo in *Grease*, said: "I don't know if I've known a lovelier human being. Olivia was the essence of summer – her sunniness, her warmth and her grace are what always come to mind when I think of her. I will miss her enormously."

John Travolta, meanwhile, wrote on Instagram: "Your impact was incredible. I love you so much. We will see you down the road and we will all be together again. Yours from the first moment I saw you and forever!" he added before signing off: "Your Danny, your John!"

Q+A

MARIAN GOLD

THE ALPHAVILLE FRONTMAN TALKS SHAKESPEARE, ORCHESTRAS AND WHY HE'S AFRAID TO WRITE MUSIC FOR THE CINEMA

WILL SIMPSON

Forever strung: Marian Gold goes symphonic to celebrate four decades in the music business

Though they're regarded as one-hit wonders in the UK, Alphaville have had a long career in their native Germany, releasing seven albums and enjoying a string of major singles during their 80s heyday. They're the latest group to go back in search of inspiration – their new album, *Eternally Yours*, is a grand symphonic 're-imagining' of their greatest hits with the help of the German Film Orchestra Babelsberg.

We caught up with frontman and original member Marian Gold to find out why they've (albeit temporarily) ditched the synths for a string section.

So yet another 80s band reinterprets their hits with the help of an orchestra. Were you nervous about being seen as trend-chasers?
I can see why it might seem that way but there were plans right from the early days of the band to incorporate an orchestra. The idea is not very new! We had some songs that already went in that direction, like *Pandora's Lullaby* (from 1997's *Salvation* album) and a couple of others like *Forever Young*. So we had a kind of curiosity as to what others would sound like. But my knowledge about writing arrangements for classical instruments is rather limited so I chose two guys who were very experienced with this kind of work – Max Knoth, who's done a lot of arrangements for Deutsche Grammophon and Christian Lohr, who's also undertaken some arrangements for us in the past. I knew they could deliver really professional reworkings of the songs.

The brand new track, *Eternally Yours*, has been constructed entirely from Shakespearean sonnets. How did you manage to craft that?
It just happened. I found it interesting, the way he perceived sexuality and eroticism in the sonnets. In some places it feels almost modern – you're not sure whether he is speaking about a boy or a girl. I collected the lines I liked and arranged them in a new context for the song and in the end it made some sort of sense! It's a story about an ageing man who loses his muse, his ability in writing music. In a way, it's me.

On the evidence of the album, much of your early material was crying out to be orchestrated, but were there any tracks that provided challenges?
Just one: *Moongirl*. The problem was, it was written as a straight four-bar song and I wanted to turn it into a waltz and really had problems singing the lines because it accelerates – between every bar there is something missing, you know. It took me several tries until I got it right.

***Forever Young* is a track that people never tire of – there have been many covers and it's been used in multiple movies. What is it about the song that makes listeners keep coming back to it?**
I have no explanation. Every little thing in it seems to be right. If we had known that back when we wrote it we would have probably fucked it up a bit! People play it at weddings, funerals… on any kind of occasion and it always seems to communicate with the situation. I wish I could say, 'Oh I planned it that way', but it was just pure luck and coincidence.

A lot of the tracks sound cinematic. Is writing for films something you've ever tried, or would like to attempt?
The one problem is that I cannot write music for other people. I mean, I probably can, but it makes me really nervous. It's so much responsibility. When you write your own music, you stand behind it and if anything bad happens it's our responsibility. If I wrote a song for someone else and it didn't work, I would feel guilty. Maybe I will do it one day, but I'm really very afraid about it.

Does it irritate you that in the UK you're viewed somewhat as one-hit wonders – the '*Big In Japan*' band?
It isn't disappointing to me because you have so many great bands in England. You do not depend so much on foreign artists. It's always difficult to get into another territory with your music. I *was* a little bit disappointed, though, when we released *Forever Young* as the follow-up and it didn't work in the UK at all (it reached No.98). I think that was the end of the story for us over there, but part of my family lives in England and I love the country. I'm a big fan of British music.

How well do you think these songs hold up after nearly 40 years?
The strange thing when you arrange songs in this way is that they become a little bit immortal, because classical is a never-changing style. As soon as you bring music into that area it immortalises it a little bit and makes it timeless. I think they hold up pretty well like this. ■

● ***Eternally Yours* is out on 23 September via Neue Meister/Edel and reviewed on page 90**

altered images
the brand new album
mascara streakz - out now
'A new winning streak starts here'
★★★★ Classic Pop
'Dancefloor hedonism with an air of wistful nostalgia' Uncut
'An exuberant, confident comeback'
Record Collector
includes glitter ball & beautiful thing
AlteRed ImAges
on tour in September
check website for details
AlteRed ImAges
mascara streakz
www.alteredimages.band

TEG LIVE EUROPE IN ASSOCIATION WITH ILA PRESENT
Boyzlife
PLUS FULL LIVE BAND
OLD SCHOOL TOUR
FEATURING ALL THE HITS FROM
BOYZONE & WESTLIFE
26 SEP LIVERPOOL PHILHARMONIC HALL
27 SEP MANCHESTER BRIDGEWATER HALL
28 SEP LEICESTER DE MONTFORT HALL
29 SEP SHEFFIELD CITY HALL
01 OCT BIRMINGHAM TOWN HALL
02 OCT CARDIFF ST DAVID'S HALL
04 OCT CAMBRIDGE CORN EXCHANGE
05 OCT READING HEXAGON
07 OCT ABERDEEN MUSIC HALL
08 OCT EDINBURGH USHER HALL
09 OCT BLACKPOOL OPERA HOUSE
11 OCT CARLISLE SANDS CENTRE
12 OCT NEWCASTLE O2 CITY HALL
14 OCT YORK BARBICAN
15 OCT BRADFORD ST GEORGE'S HALL
16 OCT STOKE-ON-TRENT VICTORIA HALL
18 OCT BOURNEMOUTH PAVILIONS THEATRE
19 OCT OXFORD NEW THEATRE
21 OCT SOUTHEND CLIFFS PAVILION
22 OCT FOLKSTONE LEAS CLIFF HALL
23 OCT SCUNTHORPE BATHS HALL
25 OCT IPSWICH REGENT THEATRE
26 OCT GUILDFORD G LIVE
27 OCT YEOVIL WESTLANDS
29 OCT PORTSMOUTH GUILDHALL
30 OCT DARTFORD ORCHARD THEATRE
01 NOV TRURO HALL FOR CORNWALL
TICKETS AVAILABLE FROM:
BOYZLIFE.CO | TICKETEK.COM
TEG LIVE EUROPE

1 HIT WONDER

BIRD OF PARADISE
SNOWY WHITE

For all of Terry "Snowy" White's long career as a guitarist with bands as prestigious as Pink Floyd and Thin Lizzy, his name is forever associated with this subtle, ambient rock ballad which briefly made him a pop star at the age of 35.

A year after leaving Thin Lizzy, White set to work on his first ever solo long-player, *White Flames*, and *Bird Of Paradise* was its lead single. Bluesy and atmospheric, with a gentle vocal and poignant lyrics, his considerable solo skills come to the fore before the third verse and extends at its coda.

Never needing to ramp up the rage on his voice or try an incongruous key change, White keeps it simple and delivers a pristine song which is accessible and pretty.

White Flames, an experimental work that included instrumentals and electronic pieces, had been in the shops for four months before *Bird Of Paradise* was A-listed by Radio 1 and reached the Top 40 at the beginning of 1984. A huge climb into the Top 20 got White on to *Top Of The Pops* and enabled the song to leap to No.6, where it peaked.

No other singles charted from the album and White returned to collaborating with others. He also continued to record, releasing his most recent LP, *Something On Me*, in 2020. He retired from touring the year before.

Matthew Rudd is the host of Forgotten 80s on Absolute 80s

POP UP POP

MADONNA REFUSES TO SIGN BIG MONEY COPYRIGHT DEAL

© Josh Brandao

Madonna has vowed to stay in control of her back catalogue, taking the opposite stance to many stars who have recently signed big-money deals for their work.

Music legends including Bruce Springsteen, Justin Timberlake, Paul Simon and Bob Dylan have been snapping up multi-million dollar sums in exchange for signing over significant parts of the publishing copyright for their back catalogues. It was reported that Dylan's deal was worth as much as $400 million.

In an interview with *Variety* magazine, though, Madonna rejected the idea saying: "They're my songs. Ownership is everything isn't it."

Instead, the star has tied up a new publishing deal with Warners that gives her control over a much-anticipated reissue campaign that has begun with the *Finally Enough Love* compilation.

Keeping tight-lipped on the detail surrounding what's to come in the future, Madonna explained to *Variety* that she is "just looking for interesting, fun ways to re-release my catalogue and introduce my music to a new generation."

Meanwhile, the star took to social media to announce her return to the studio with "surprises" planned in terms of fresh material for the new year in 2023. On 8 August, the star also released *Material Gworrlllllll!*, a team-up with rapper Saucy Santana, a remix to Saucy's own viral *Material Girl song* that was inspired by Madonna's original hit from 1984.

© Getty

OBITUARY
PAUL RYDER
(1964-2022)

Tributes have been paid to Happy Mondays' bassist Paul Ryder who has died suddenly at the age of 58.

Ryder was expected to play a show at Sunderland's Kubix Festival on 15 July but passed away just hours before the Mondays were due on stage. A message on the band's social media read: "The Ryder family and Happy Mondays band members are deeply saddened and shocked to say that Paul Ryder passed away this morning. A true pioneer and legend. He will be forever missed. We thank you for respecting the privacy of all concerned at this time. Long live his funk."

Alongside his brother Shaun, Paul was a founder member of the legendary Mancunian outfit which formed in 1980. Paul played on all of the Happy Mondays' studio albums with the exception of 2007's *Uncle Dysfunktional*, and due to an often fractious relationship with Shaun he sat out the band's first reformation in 2004 but had been a full-time member since the 2012 reunion onwards.

Apart from his work with the Mondays, Ryder released a 2008 LP with Big Arm before moving to Los Angeles at the end of the decade. He also played live, supporting The Tom Tom Club – the group's mainstay members Tina Weymouth and Chris Frantz had previously produced the Happy Mondays' 1992 album *Yes Please!*

The Stone Roses' Ian Brown tweeted: "Rest in peace Paul Ryder. A great friend. A great musician. A great fella." Manchester DJ Dave Haslam also paid tribute, noting Paul's "massive contribution to the Happy Mondays." Peter Hook added: "What a shock. Paul Ryder was the archetypal solid, quiet, strong, dependable bass player. A lovely man, respectful and charming. When the Mondays got back together I remember seeing them play and he looked so happy. And they needed him back so much, he gave them soul and passion."

● **For more details on the charity release of a Happy Mondays single in Paul's memory, see page 78**

THE BEST OF
ROXY MUSIC

THE DEFINITIVE ROXY MUSIC COLLECTION ON VINYL FOR THE FIRST TIME

18 classic songs including 'More Than This', 'Jealous Guy', 'Love Is The Drug' and 'Virginia Plain'.

2 LP BLACK VINYL · CD · DIGITAL
ALSO AVAILABLE AS LIMITED EDITION 2 LP YELLOW VINYL

2 SEPTEMBER 2022

UMC

When this writer last spoke to Howard Jones, the general atmosphere – for reasons beyond our control – was decidedly glum. Aside from the very welcome reissue of Howard's criminally overlooked *Cross That Line* LP, there was no particular cause to celebrate. The world was frozen in perpetual lockdown: live music was off the cards, international travel was a distant memory. Jones had just streamed a poignant audience-less solo performance to raise funds for out-of-work roadcrew. Amidst the prevailing doom and Zoom, we pondered the dubious future of live music.

Fast-forward to the present, HoJo finds himself in the middle of a successful US tour (complete with band, crew and audience), enjoying sold-out gigs and rave reviews. Oh, and there's a cracking new studio album on the way, *Dialogue*, opening with the buoyant electro-pop banger, *Celebrate It Together.*

Q+A
HOWARD JONES

THE ELECTRO-POP PIONEER IS BACK ON THE ROAD PLAYING SOLD-OUT LIVE SHOWS AND WITH A RAZOR-SHARP NEW STUDIO ALBUM TO BOOT – AND HIS LATEST OFFERING *DIALOGUE* SAYS WE NEED TO TALK. SO LET'S DO IT…

FELIX ROWE

What a difference a year or two makes! Things seem to be going OK?
Yeah, it's going great. We're currently somewhere between Denver and Milwaukee – we have a day off before playing a festival show. It's so good to be out here on the road again. I really love what I do and getting the opportunity to do this! I'm over here with the full band, so I've got Robin Boult on guitar, Robbie Bronnimann on keys, Dan Burton on keys and percussion, and, of course, Nick Beggs on the Chapman stick. One thing that amazes me about the shows we're doing is how many younger people there are in the audience, which is just wonderful – there's a whole new generation connecting with the music for the first time.

You're among several contemporaries to have been enjoying some major movie and TV syncs in the US, from *Breaking Bad* to *Everybody Hates Chris.* Both yourself and touring mate Nick Beggs' old band Kajagoogoo, for example, have also experienced the *Stranger Things* effect...
Things Can Only Get Better received some big exposure in season three of *Stranger Things,* which had a humongous impact on Spotify. It's really surprising and fun to see this whole new audience discovering us through these shows.

Things Can Only Get Stranger: Jones has found a fresh audience through TV shows

And *Too Shy* has snuck its way into the setlist, too...
That's right! It's great to be playing with Nick Beggs again. *Too Shy* is one of those big tracks and I really wanted to perform that with him.

You're also joined by Midge Ure, who's opening the tour. Your paths have crossed many times over the years. Is it fun hooking up with him again?
Yes, we're touring with my good friend Midge, all travelling on the bus together. We've been friends for many years. I mean, I have very few friends from the music industry specifically, but Midge has always been one. We live near each other, so he's been over to the house, and we've got together with our families so, you know, it's good fun to be on the road together.

What's all this we hear about playing *Do They Know It's Christmas* in the height of summer?
Haha, yes, well... it's a special moment to share with Midge and the fans. Obviously, there's the whole Live Aid association, and the fans kind of see beyond the seasonal references to get to wider sentiment of the song.

Are you and Midge cooking up any plans to write some music together during those long journeys between shows?
We haven't actually talked about it specifically, but I'm sure we will... of course, he has played on my records.

Your new album speaks of finding common ground and the need to break down the barriers amid glowing polarisation. (Howard has said: "We have to talk and thrash things out in order to communicate that at the most profound level.") Though the album title had been mooted for a while, this notion has become even more prescient in the post-lockdown world...
Absolutely. That optimism has always been a key part of my music and the need to come together and work things out. That's so important right now, more so than ever really.

***Celebrate It Together* was apparently your attempt to create the most optimistic song you've ever written.**

Working In The Backroom: Howard conceived *Dialogue* alone during lockdown

We think you've hit the brief there. It's positively stuffed with earworms. It sounds like you've been having a lot of fun with the synths on this new album.
I've always been really inspired by George Michael's writing, in how he would just sit on a groove, but then load it with all these riffs and catchy hooks. So *Celebrate…* takes something from that. Because of lockdown, it's been just me on my own in the studio with the synths, so by nature it's even more electronic. But, yes, I've had lots of fun playing with vintage synthesizers and then some brand new synths and software, too, so it's a real combination of these things. That said, my guitarist Robin Boult sent me samples of his guitar playing, which I've been incorporating into the mix, too.

"OPTIMISM HAS ALWAYS BEEN A KEY PART OF MY MUSIC AND THE NEED TO COME TOGETHER AND WORK THINGS OUT. THAT'S SO IMPORTANT RIGHT NOW, MORE SO THAN EVER REALLY."

Following the success of *Transform*, have you been working with hip US producer BT again?
Yes. I've worked with BT on a couple of tracks on the new LP. *Celebrate It Together* began from a genesis of something from BT. And then *Be The Hero* is a more 50/50 collaboration. Actually, I'll be meeting up with him when we play Washington, so I'm going to try to talk him into doing a remix or a new version of those tracks.

What inspires you to keep writing music?
I don't have to keep making albums but, you know, it's what I do and what I know. But although I love creating music, obviously doing an album is still a commitment of time and you have to physically see that process through to completion. It takes me a long time to make an album. So, really, I committed to doing the four studio albums in 10 years, so that I would have to fulfil the commitment. You know, I told everybody I was going to do it, so now I have to!

Indeed, *Dialogue* is the third of four proposed electronic releases, preceded by 2015's *Engage* and *Transform* four years later. What can you tell us about the final instalment, *Global Citizen*?
Well, it'll be electronic again. I've enjoyed returning to that over the last few years, and it clearly connects with the fans, too. It's still early days, I have a couple of ideas let over from *Dialogue*.

It looks like you'll be tied up for a few years then. What's next after that?
There are some other projects in the works. I'm loving doing all the electronic stuff and delving into the synths, but I get that urge to explore the other more acoustic side to my songwriting, too. I'm working on a new instrumental, piano-based project, hopefully to come out next year. I've got a new Steinway Spirio that can record what you play and then play it back – there are some amazing things that you would never be able to perform live that can be programmed in and played back. So, I've been waiting for that. We're putting together sheet music, too, so that people will be able to play along.

***Transform* was a big hit with the fans. With your recent catalogue being very consciously electronic, how do you reimagine the songs for the acoustic trio?**
That's a good question because there's only one song from the new record that I think will definitely work with the acoustic trio [laughs], which is *Formed By The Stars*. So that will be interesting. But sometimes there's one that you never think will translate to piano, then you get a whole different perspective on it.

***Formed By The Stars* has an almost menacing quality to it in the groove and mood…**
Um, well that's not what I was going for… but it's interesting the different interpretations that people take from a track.

Perhaps, 'atmospheric' was more the word… You've got quite the back catalogue. How do you choose which songs to play live in the setlist?
We don't want to overload the fans with new material that they're not familiar with, so we're just playing a couple of the new tracks, which are *Celebrate It Together* and *Who You Really Want To Be*. We're also rehearsing *Be The Hero*, but we haven't got the arrangement down for that one yet. But, you have to remember why you're there in the first place and why people are coming out to watch you. I read an interview with Paul McCartney recently saying how you've got to play what the fans want, you know, how he would be disappointed if he went to see his favourite band and they didn't play the hits. And it's true! So, you've got to give people what they want. But we find new ways of playing the old songs that keeps it exciting and interesting for us as musicians, too. We play about with the instrumentation and arrangements, the beats become more contemporary, to bring things up to date.

Is there anywhere you haven't been yet that you'd like to play?
I don't know really, I've been playing over here in the US since 1984 or so, so I've probably seen more of America than most Americans! L.A., San Francisco… The US has always been particularly receptive – more so than the UK and Europe. Salt Lake City is great, it's almost like a second home. Some places obviously take to what you do more than others, but they were always particularly receptive in Salt Lake City right from the start. We have just sold out a 3,000-capacity venue there, and that's for several tours in a row. Then, after the US, we'll be back in the UK and Europe later in the year, so we look forward to the home audiences, too. ■

● ***Dialogue* is released on 9 September via Dtox Records and reviewed on page 82.**

LOST & FOUND

GIVING YOU THE BEST THAT I GOT
ANITA BAKER

The richness of Anita Baker's voice resonates immaculately through a superb third album that confirmed her status as the finest R&B singer of her era.

Appearing in the mind's eye on songs such as the exquisite *Lead Me Into Love* and the heartfelt title track is the image of Baker eyeing the crowd while perched on the edge of the piano.

Good Love follows a similarly mellow path, with some soothing harmonies on top, while the poppy album opener *Priceless* and mid-tempo *Just Because*, with a beautiful electric piano backing, maintains the romantic feel of the whole LP. Meanwhile, the final track, *You Belong To Me*, is a proper dance-pop effort that draws the record furthest away from its dominant jazz influences.

The album made No.1 in the United States and the title track scored No.3 on the Hot 100. Through both LP and single she won three Grammys and was nominated for two more.

In the UK, *Giving You The Best That I Got* reached the Top 10 and went gold, an excellent achievement for an album with no hits. The title track came closest, reaching No.55 at the end of 1988.

As far as singles went, Baker remained a one-hit wondress – 1986's *Sweet Love*, from her second long-player *Rapture* – but she had two more Top 20 albums before taking a long break to raise a family.

Matthew Rudd

SMITH GET HIS WISH WITH CURE REISSUE

As Cure fans hold their breath for the band's long-awaited new studio album – and possibly two LP's worth of material – they'll get the chance to revisit a 30th anniversary deluxe edition of *Wish*.

The band's best-selling 1992 LP, *Wish* reached No.1 in the UK and No.2 in the US, where it was nominated for a Grammy in the Best Alternative Music Album category. Hitting record stores on 7 October via UMC/Fiction/Polydor, the deluxe 3CD 45-track edition features 24 previously unreleased tracks and four songs that are new to CD and digital.

CD1 contains the original *Wish* album newly remastered by Robert Smith and Miles Showell at Abbey Road studios. The second disc features 21 previously unreleased demos, including four studio vocal demos from 1990 as well as 17 instrumental demos from 1991 – nine of the latter are previously unreleased. The third CD in the set features the four tracks from 1993's mail-order only cassette, *Lost Wishes*, as yet unavailable on CD or on digital platforms. *Uyea Sound* from *Lost Wishes* can be heard as a digital single now.

Also included is the previously unreleased song *A Wendy Band* from the 1992 Manor Studio sessions, an unheard mix of the epic live favourite *From The Edge Of The Deep Green Sea*, as well as five rare 12" mixes. Finally, closing the set is an unheard live version of *End* from Paris Bercy in October 1992.

From the start of the recording, Smith had a clear vision of what *Wish* should be. "We used a pretty small palette of sounds, as we did with *Disintegration*, but managed to create a lot of different kinds of songs with it. I think *Kiss Me* was more of a reference than *Disintegration*."

Listening back to the record in 2022, Smith reveals: "There's a side to the album which I had kind of forgotten, a very gentle, yearning thing which is quite beautiful. *Trust* is one of the best things we've ever done I think. It's played with great feeling, and *To Wish Impossible Things* is another gorgeous, melancholic piece. In fact, it could well be my favourite song on the record."

Smith has also finally made his peace with the original: "In the studio control room it all sounded excellent, but I got too busy sorting out our upcoming concerts to properly oversee the mastering. It was too late to do anything about it; the album was out, and we were off around the world again. It has really bugged for me for a very long time. It has taken 30 years, but finally my Wish has come true."

The Cure begin a 44-date European tour in October this year, closing with eight shows in the UK in December.

● **Read our review of the 30th anniversary *Wish* reissue on page 87**

CONTEMPORARY REFIT FOR WHAM'S SUMMER ANTHEM

Andrew Ridgeley has joined forces with drummar – aka songwriter and producer Dru Masters – for a contemporary reboot of Wham's summer classic *Club Tropicana*.

Ridgeley explains that the pair have given the 1983 hit a modern overhaul for their *Wonderland Redux* remix: "Our primary goal was to retain the character and personality of the song and the record that George and I wrote and recorded. drummar's take starts with the instantly recognisable cicada sound effects of the original version played over an atmospheric call-and-answer synth melody, which then kicks into overdrive with a high-octane sonic facelift of the verse, building progressively into a pumping sonic torrent in the chorus."

He continues: "It became a track that defined the hedonistic pleasure of sunny Mediterranean island summer holidays and we were guided by that perspective in our reworking of this definitive holiday anthem. Hence our title for this track, *Wonderland Redux*. It's the bringing back of a moment of magic, re-presenting, for a new generation, the wonder and joy of the heady and carefree days of youth. It's the soundtrack to summer renewed and reaffirmed and I hope it conveys the same vitality and pleasure George and I imagined in the original."

DEBBIE HARRY
KooKoo
Special Limited Edition
Remastered by Abbey Road from the original 1/4" Production Tape
2LP 180gm Crystal Clear Vinyl
Lenticular Sleeve
Chris Stein Art Print
Includes Bonus Remixes 12"
Released 14th October 2022

HOWARD JONES
THE BRAND NEW ELECTRONIC ALBUM 2022
DIALOGUE
(Shipping Feb 2023)
Available now as a strictly limited edition (2000)
Signed Deluxe 2 CD Box Set
Available to pre-order as a limited edition (1000)
Signed 140gm Black Vinyl LP
ONLY AVAILABLE AT
www.howardjones.com/shop

IAN PEEL'S A TO Z POP of POP

T IS FOR... TV THEMES

STRANGE BUT TRUE: SOME OF THE BIGGEST AND BEST CLASSIC POP 'HITS' – AND SOME A-LIST HIDDEN GEMS – WERE NOT RELEASED AS SINGLES BUT AS TV THEMES

Perhaps the biggest pop hit that started life as a TV theme tune was New Order's *World In Motion*. When the Football Association came up with the idea for New Order's collaboration with the England squad, the group turned to a theme they'd put together for the BBC North West show, *Reportage* (the Beeb's version of Channel 4's *Network 7*, for which they poached presenters Magenta Devine and Sankha Guha).

What the band turned *Theme From Reportage* into has become pop's most important contribution to the world of football. Or perhaps that accolade should go to the New Order track *Best & Marsh*? It was this piece, recorded for a Granada TV series about George Best and Rodney Marsh and used on the B-side of *Round & Round*, that apparently gave the FA the idea of contacting the band in the first place.

In terms of hidden gems, do you happen to remember a BBC Two drama from 1991 called *For The Greater Good*? Possibly not, but if it ever gets repeated, make sure you watch it. Not for the politico/prison intrigue or the ever-reliable Martin Shaw in the leading role (or even for Michael Winner in a rare acting cameo in a couple of episodes). Watch it for the theme music which is a still-unreleased instrumental piece by OMD.

It's an interesting track also because it's OMD right in the middle of morphing from *Dreaming*-era 80s excess into 90s-era dance-pop. And if memory serves correctly, this was the first I actually heard of the reconfigured group before *Sailing On The Seven Seas* or the *Sugar Tax* album were even released.

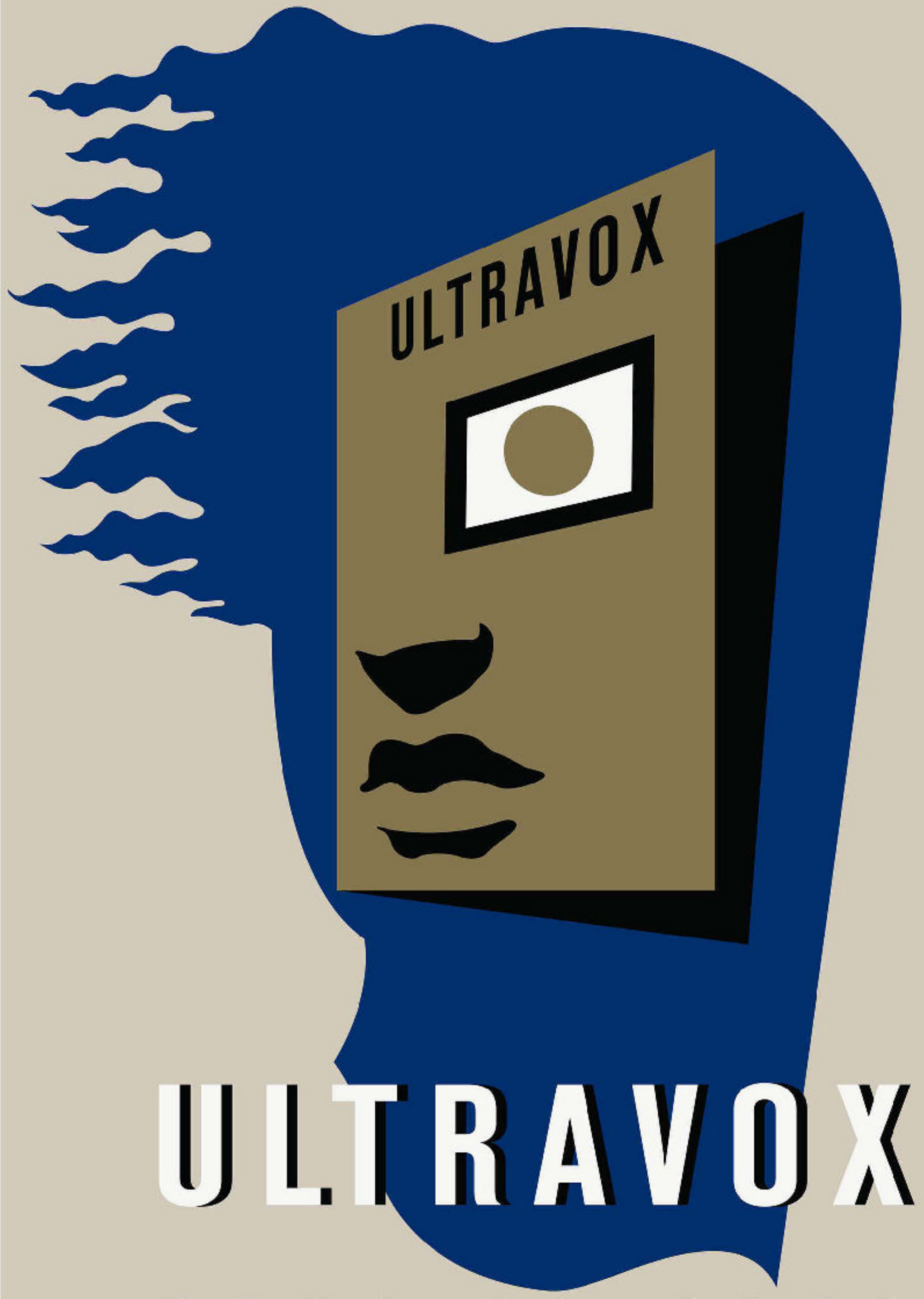
Another big 'TV hit' of the 80s has to be Pet Shop Boys' *In The Night*, used as the opening and closing theme to Selena Scott and Jeff Banks' fashion weekly, *The Clothes Show*. And, despite what some nostalgia shows might lead people to think, we were all watching and listening to the same things in the 80s. Consequently, the show opened PSBs' music up to a much wider audience than they might otherwise have found. In fact, "What was the theme tune to *The Clothes Show*?" is still as much a Googled question as anything to do with the duo's discography. One quick aside: *In The Night* was not the first theme to the show. It was, in fact, a Shep Pettibone remix of Five Star's *Find The Time*. Who knew?

> PET SHOP BOYS' *IN THE NIGHT*, USED AS THE THEME TO FASHION WEEKLY, *THE CLOTHES SHOW*, OPENED THEIR MUSIC UP TO A MUCH WIDER AUDIENCE THAN THEY MIGHT OTHERWISE HAVE FOUND

It's a similar story for the Art of Noise. Music fans know them for their singles. Everyone else knows them for the theme from *The Krypton Factor*. Although sadly not for their theme for *The Max Headroom Show*, which I thought was far superior.

All of this leads me to ask... why doesn't this happen anymore? Why aren't modern pop artists writing for cool TV shows and making them even cooler? The only recent example that I can think of is former CocknBullKid Anita Blay's delightful *Doing It Wrong*, used as the theme for BBC Three's high school comedy *Some Girls*.

Rather more obscure, I have a vivid memory – the memory that inspired this issue's *A To Z* – of ABC's *A To Z* being used as the theme to a school's educational programme in the mid-80s. A daring choice when the track in question is a particularly out-there (slightly racy) B-side. If anyone can remember which show that was, they deserve a medal. And it deserves to be repeated, like all of those mentioned, for their theme tune content alone.



ULTRAVOX

RAGE IN EDEN

40TH ANNIVERSARY DELUXE EDITION

5CD/DVD

Original 1981 album | New Steven Wilson Stereo & 5.1 Surround Mixes | Singles/B-Sides and Previously Unreleased Rehearsals / Work In Progress Versions and a full concert from Hammersmith Odeon 1981

Also available (tracklists vary): 4LP Clear Vinyl Box Set | 2LP Black Vinyl Half-Speed Master | Digital
Artist Store Exclusive Picture Disc and Bundles

REL. 30TH SEPTEMBER 2022

POP

SEPTEMBER 1982

A HIGH-CLASS SELECTION WITH CULTURE CLUB ON THEIR WAY UP, STEVE MILLER CASTING HIS SPELL, QUEEN'S FINAL STATESIDE TV PERFORMANCE WITH FREDDIE – AND A LARGELY FORGOTTEN MULTI-MILLION DOLLAR CALIFORNIAN FESTIVAL CURATED BY AN APPLE EXEC…

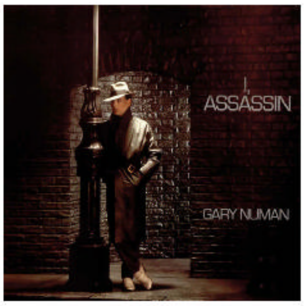
STEVE O'BRIEN

04 The Steve Miller Band begin a two-week run at No.1 in the US with *Abracadabra*. The song is allegedly inspired by Diana Ross.

06 Peter Gabriel releases his fourth solo album, once again eponymously titled. In the United States, the record is renamed *Security*.

06 Culture Club release *Do You Really Want To Hurt Me* as the third single from their debut LP, *Kissing To Be Clever*. It will give the band their first No.1.

10 *It's Raining Men* by The Weather Girls is released. The song was originally intended for Donna Summer, who turned it down, labelling it as "blasphemous".



10 Gary Numan unveils his fourth solo studio LP, *I, Assassin*. It will peak at No.8 on the UK Albums Chart.

21 Janet Jackson's debut album, *Janet Jackson*, hits record stores. It fails to chart in the UK and only peaks at No.63 in the US.

19 *Eye Of The Tiger* by Survivor begins its fourth week at the top of the UK Singles Chart.

25 Queen appear on *Saturday Night Live* – their last performance with Freddie Mercury in the States – where they perform *Crazy Little Thing Called Love* and *Under Pressure*.

22 Future pop star and *Doctor Who* companion Billie Piper is born Leian Paul Piper in Swindon, Wiltshire.

28 Art-rock musician St Vincent is born Anne Erin Clark in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

© Getty

© Getty

3

The three-day US Festival (pronounced 'us', as in the pronoun, not the initials) kicked off on 3 September in San Bernardino, California. Organised and bankrolled by Apple co-founder Steve Wozniak, the event boasted some truly stellar names, with Fleetwood Mac, The Police, Tom Petty, Talking Heads, plus The Kinks, Ramones, The B52's, The Beat (as The English Beat) and Gang Of Four among those performing.

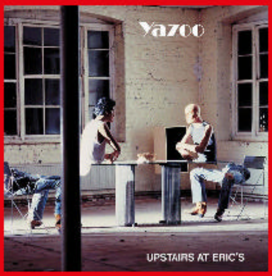
Wozniak spent a year and a reported $12.5 million on the festival, which was hyped at the time as the Woodstock of the 80s. Apple's role in the festival, however, was never far from people's minds, as Wozniak had placed a large hot-air balloon, emblazoned with the company's logo, next to the main stage. Several of the Apple bigwigs of the time attended, though Steve Jobs was nowhere to be seen.

All told, nearly 500,000 turned up over those three days, but despite this, there were just 36 arrests. In May 1983 'Woz' was at it again, for the second and final US Festival, with INXS, The Clash, U2, Stevie Nicks, David Bowie and The Pretenders topping the bill.

TOP 5 UK ALBUMS CHART
5 SEPTEMBER 1982

1 THE KIDS FROM FAME
THE KIDS FROM FAME

2 UPSTAIRS AT ERIC'S
YAZOO



3 TOO-RYE-AYE
DEXY'S MIDNIGHT RUNNERS

4 RIO
DURAN DURAN

5 THE LEXICON OF LOVE
ABC

"Innovation is probably our greatest strength"

A fairytale of New York: Blondie in their late-70s pomp

© Martyn Goddard © Getty © Bob Gruen

GENERALLY A BAND DETERMINED TO LOOK FORWARD, EVEN BLONDIE CAN'T HELP REVISITING THEIR PAST WHEN FACED WITH A LONG-PLANNED, GIGANTIC BOXSET MARKING THEIR IMPERIAL FIRST PHASE. WITH DEBBIE HARRY, CHRIS STEIN AND CLEM BURKE IN UNUSUALLY REFLECTIVE MOOD, THEY REVEAL THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN POP AND PUNK, HOW THEY COULD HAVE KEPT GOING LONGER – AND RUBBING SHOULDERS WITH ORSON WELLES...

JOHN EARLS

"50% of people think Blondie is Debbie. And in a way she *is* Blondie, but it's the band, too": Clem Burke on the group's iconic lead singer

Initially scheduled for release four years ago, Blondie's first major boxset, *Against The Odds*, is literally one of the biggest collections *Classic Pop* has ever encountered. Our postman hasn't stopped scowling since having to lug it from the van. The set comprises 10 vinyl albums, two singles *and* two hardback books, with even the cardboard mailing parcel unique: it's got a monochrome vintage photo of Debbie Harry stamped on the inside.

No wonder even Blondie's usually deadpan guitarist Chris Stein is animated discussing the venture. "It looks *amazing*," he enthuses. "I didn't realise just how grand that boxset was going to be as a physical reality." A pause, as Chris tries to think how to summarise the compendium of his band's golden first phase. "It weighs *18 pounds*," the guitarist breathes, in the awed tones of a fisherman on his greatest catch. "It's very impressive."

However, Chris isn't totally delirious when discussing the boxset compiling Blondie's first eight years, when they went from trashy upstarts viewed as also-rans in New York's thriving underground 70s scene to the most glamorous, sophisticated band of theirs and pretty much anyone else's era, making a succession of stunning singles every bit as cool as their image. The press release for *Against The Odds* states that the boxset's 50+ extra tracks were mostly sourced from demo tapes Chris had kept in his barn in upstate New York. It's that info which Stein disputes. "I don't know how the word 'barn' has got out there, I don't have a barn: the tapes were in a *garage* next to my studio. In my eyes, a 'barn' is a much draughtier affair."

It's at this point that Debbie Harry joins proceedings. She's missed the first two minutes of our conference call, because, well, she's Debbie Harry. She's warm, inquisitive about people and laughs a lot, a delighted and uncontrolled burst as infectious as her vocals. But also: you're talking to Actual Debbie Harry. Don't mess this up, now.

Debbie doesn't introduce herself, instead immediately out to make mischief with her eternal right-hand ally. "Yeah, but what you're talking about could be a barn," Harry points out, to Stein's frustration. "No it's not!" he exclaims. "What *I've* got is sealed off and temperature controlled." Debbie responds: "Sure, but some of those modern barns are really well-designed, you know?" It's at this point that Chris – friendly, jokey, but also with the imperious air of a man who knows full well he's been one of the coolest people in New York for 45 years and counting – admits defeat. "I guess so," he mutters. "I just picture barns with grass, straw and cracks in the walls. My image of a 'barn' is different to yours."

And that's *Classic Pop*'s introduction to one of the great partnerships in pop: good-natured bickering about barns. It's not all drug-fuelled mayhem and hanging out with Talking Heads. Though, sure, that comes into play in their story, too. In the book about the band's history inside the boxset, Debbie says the character of Blondie was clear from the start: if Blondie was falling from the top of the Empire State Building, she'd want to have fun on the way down. Does that still apply 48 years later? "Yeah, sure!" she says, before another laugh whose sound suggests everything might be OK in life after all. "Having a sense of humour about who you are is the ideal outlook on life. It's self-preservation at its highest. That and a certain sophistication have always been there in Blondie." Chris adds: "You have to see life as amusing, otherwise it just gets grim. I'm always amused, even as America slides into mediocre fascism. I'm hard-pressed to know who's doing a better job of that, us or the UK. It's 'hold my beer,' as they say."

Despair at Western politics aside, Blondie can afford to laugh at themselves now. When they started, any self-mockery was more about gallows humour. Before their pugnacious self-titled 1976 debut album, the group were more of a stepping stone to cult stardom elsewhere than valued for their own merits. Second guitarist Ivan Král quickly left for Patti Smith's band, then bassist Fred Smith departed to join Television.

It was new drummer Clem Burke who stopped Blondie falling apart. Talking to *Classic Pop* the day after Grayson Perry hosts a ceremony granting Blondie a fellowship to London's St Martin's School Of Art, Clem, an affable, perennial optimist explains: "If you're in a band, you need a vision to believe in." It's easy to see why people would want to join any band of Clem's. "As a drummer, I'd been looking for a David Bowie or a Jim Morrison as the frontperson in my band. When I met Debbie, I knew she was my Bowie, my Morrison. She was super-talented, obviously glamorous. I had no problem in seeing the magic that could be there in Blondie."

BEATLE BOOTS AND BOWIE

Following Debbie Harry's 2019 autobiography *Face It*, Clem Burke began writing his own memoir during lockdown. "I started tidying my pantry during the pandemic," jokes Burke. "Once I'd sorted the pots and pans, I got to my archives and thought that I should do a book about them."

The drummer has unearthed plenty of long-forgotten ticket stubs, backstage passes for tours with David Bowie and The Kinks and other ephemera. He recalls: "When I first came to London, me and Chris had custom boots made by Anello & Davide, the firm who made the so-called Beatle boots. I remember measuring Chris' feet for them, and found the receipt for our fancy custom boots from Oxford Street, for a whole £10. The book will be full of little moments like that."

© Getty

Clem's other project is writing an album with Debbie and Andy Harris – aka the Londoners behind The Bootleg Blondie. Burke toured with the tribute band in 2019, and has taken their friendship a stage further, revealing: "Controversial as touring with the Bootlegs was, I really enjoyed it. We've written 42 songs together, everything in style from big band to Steve Marriott. I've been co-producing with Debbie and Andy in Lewisham. In an ideal world, what we're writing would become a West End musical, but I'll need to phone Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd-Webber to see if they'll allow us a venue for that first."

Debbie and Clem shot backstage by *Punk* magazine photographer Roberta Bayley – more intimate images can be seen in her book *Blondie: Unseen 1976-1980*

© Michael Zagaris

"WHEN I MET DEBBIE, I KNEW SHE WAS MY BOWIE, MY MORRISON… I HAD NO PROBLEM SEEING THE MAGIC THAT COULD BE THERE IN BLONDIE"

CLEM BURKE

Blondie pre-1977 lift off: (L-R) Clem Burke, Jimmy Destri, Chris Stein, Debbie Harry and Gary Valentine

Clem suggested his old schoolfriend Gary Valentine and pal Frank Infante as Blondie's new bassist and guitarist respectively. Soon after, looking for a pianist to further their retro sound to stand out from the punk crowd, Blondie instead met keyboardist Jimmy Destri, as Gary was friends with Jimmy's sister. "A lot of things happened by accident," laughs Burke. "At the time, you think everything is going according to the pre-ordained vision of success that you have in your head when you're 20. The New York scene was enigmatic, but also very insular. That whole scene consisted of maybe 100 people, about 85 of whom were in bands. But all of those bands were interesting, and we could see things in one another. We'd cover songs by Television or Ramones before they'd even been recorded. Crucially, we could make mistakes in public, finding our way at those early shows. Even at the time, I saw the CBGB's club as our version of the Cavern where The Beatles started."

Second album *Plastic Letters* is where Blondie's pop ethos starts falling into place. It's largely as rough and ready as its predecessor, but it also contains the absurdly catchy *Denis* and *(I'm Always Touched By Your) Presence, Dear*. Those first two albums were produced by Richard

Gottehrer, previously a songwriter at the Brill Building alongside Carole King, where he penned hits including *Hang On Sloopy* and future Bow Wow Wow smash *I Want Candy*. "Richard was more of a jazz producer than a pop guy," states Harry. "He really liked finding a band's live sound." Stein agrees, adding: "We'd do four or five takes and Richard would choose the best one. He didn't push us much beyond that. Those first two albums are semi-live." Burke points out: "Richard focused in on what he thought could be singles: *X Offender*, *Denis*. The idea was to have a hit, then thrash out the rest of the songs to fill out the album. Those first two records are great, but some of it is better produced than the rest."

The contrast between the carefree *Denis* and the attitudinal punk of most of *Plastic Letters* established an unpredictability that has carried on throughout Blondie's career. To the public, it was thrilling that they couldn't guess what their next single would sound like. To critics who needed to categorise a band, being too pop for punk and too punk for pop was more problematic. "All those significations about punk, pop or reggae, they were always more relevant to their time period than the style of the music itself," reasons Debbie. "When it was happening, the punk scene embodied a lot of different styles and a lot of different types of music. It was only later that 'punk' came to

Debbie Harry and Chris Stein at the Mediasound Recording Studio, NYC, 1979

Blondie at the height of their powers: (L-R) Nigel Harrison, Chris Stein, Clem Burke, Jimmy Destri, Frank Infante and Debbie Harry

represent a particular kind of music. What we were called was always down to whatever time period we were in, more than the music we made." Another laugh. "We always seemed to be the exception to any scene's particular rules." Chris joins in the laughter, noting: "Whether we cared what we were called depended on how much we cared about the media at any one time. We always called ourselves a pop band."

Burke adds that Blondie thrives on sowing confusion: "Our musical palette is very broad. Besides, 50% of people think Blondie is Debbie. And in a way, she *is* Blondie, but it's the band, too. There's a lot of that type of confusion with us. One of our strongest redeeming values is that no-one knows what to make of us."

Blondie's then-manager Peter Leeds was a divisive figure, happy to heighten the perception that everyone in the band was disposable except Debbie. But Clem accepts Peter was also canny enough not to let Blondie be defined by scenes. "We were asked to support the Sex Pistols on their Anarchy Tour," the drummer reveals. "Our manager, probably very wisely, turned it down because he said the Pistols were too associated with punk rock. He had us shy away from that label as much as possible, telling me not to accept a Drummer Of The Year award from a punk magazine. But we *were* punk, in terms of being outside of society and not following the rules."

The clearest move away from punk came with third album *Parallel Lines,* an all-time classic featuring *Heart Of Glass* and *One Way Or Another* and housed in photographer Edo Bertoglio's iconic sleeve that embodied Blondie's defiance. The band's songwriting had outgrown Richard Gottehrer. For a more streamlined approach, they turned to Mike Chapman who, together with Nicky Chinn, was responsible for

Harry on the set of the *Heart of Glass* video – contrary to pop music mythology it wasn't shot at Studio 54...

© Getty

> **"*EVERYTHING* WAS CHAOTIC ABOUT BLONDIE – THERE WAS ALWAYS TENSION AND INSANITY AND THAT MADE FOR GOOD RECORDS"**
>
> **CHRIS STEIN**

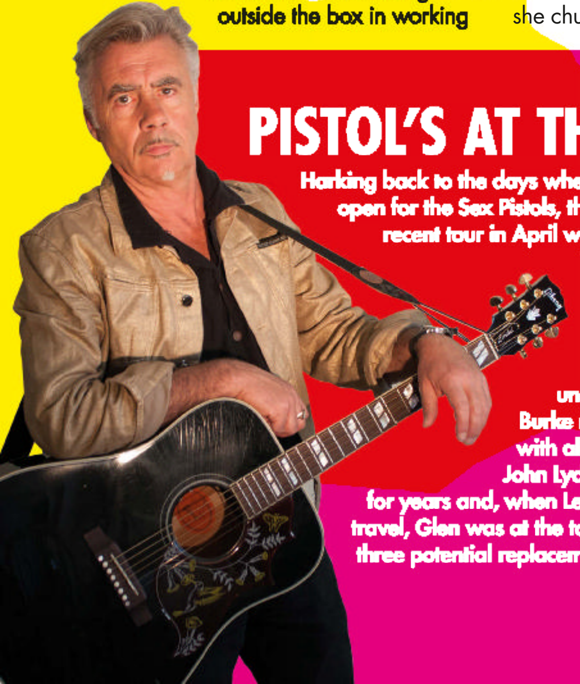
defining 70s glam as producer for The Sweet, Mud and Suzi Quatro.

"We liked *Tiger Feet* as much as we liked The Velvet Underground," notes Clem. "We were into bubblegum music, and the Ramones said The Bay City Rollers influenced *Blitzkrieg Bop*. But don't forget, those big songs Mike produced that went to No.1 in the UK, none of them meant anything in the States. Nobody knew who The Sweet or Suzi Quatro were back home. It meant we were looking outside the box in working with Mike: we'd have a headstart in Europe, but the sound would take people by surprise in the States."

"Mike was great," reflects Stein. "One of the key things I learned from him was how to repeat something and still keep it fresh. Knowing that repetition is worthwhile is a skill you need in pretty much every artform, like Stanley Kubrick directing 40 takes for a scene in a movie." That meticulous approach jarred with Debbie, who labelled the producer "a dictator," but she acknowledges now that the discipline paid off. "Mike occasionally drove me crazy, but that's a pretty short trip," she chuckles. "I had a hard time doing a lot of takes, but I learned a lot from Mike, too. I learned to listen more carefully, which is invaluable in acting as well, where listening is more important than your own portrayal. And Mike recognised that singing and playing an instrument need to be treated differently. An instrument won't wear out or get tired, but a voice will. He wouldn't make me sing something over and over for an hour straight, which he might make Chris or Clem do. So there was still a lot of spontaneity in my vocals, no matter what I might have said otherwise at the time."

Blondie insist that, though Mike streamlined their sound, they weren't out to turn themselves into a pop juggernaut. Stein explains: "The songwriting horizons have always been the same. The conglomerate of Blondie has always had the approach that anything goes. That's been true from when we started up until now." Burke reasons: "We've always thought we were being experimental. There was a backlash against *Heart Of Glass*, because we were supposedly 'going disco', but we were just trying to see if we could merge Donna Summer with Kraftwerk. Sure, we thought *Heart Of Glass* was a great song, but we buried it. In the days when bands put the songs most likely to be a hit at the start of an album to impress a DJ dropping the needle on a record, we put *Heart Of Glass* as the 10th song on *Parallel Lines*."

Follow-up album *Eat To The Beat* features the timeless *Union City Blue*, but even Mike Chapman wasn't able to force as much of a cohesive record from his charges. In the boxset's book, the producer says Blondie's fourth LP was "chaotic," stating drugs were beginning to infiltrate the band. "Mike is kinda right," considers Chris. "At the same time, *everything* was chaotic about Blondie. There was always tension and insanity, and that made for good records." Debbie adds: "Tension and chaos keeps people on their toes. It gives you drive, but there's positives and negatives when you live your life like that. Musically, it



PISTOL'S AT THE READY

Harking back to the days when they were asked to open for the Sex Pistols, the bassist on Blondie's recent tour in April was Glen Matlock.

The ex-Pistol stepped in when health concerns meant Blondie bassist Leigh Foxx was unable to tour. Clem Burke reveals: "I'm friends with all of the Pistols, except John Lydon. I've known Glen for years and, when Leigh was unable to travel, Glen was at the top of a shortlist of three potential replacements. It was at short notice, only eight or nine days, but Glen is a mate that I can rely on. He couldn't make our warm-up show on the tour, so his first time playing with Blondie was to 15,000 people at Glasgow Hydro."

Matlock is now playing bass on Blondie's next album while Leigh continues to recuperate. Chris Stein explained: "Glen has been just great. Unlike *Pollinator*, we're mostly keeping this album in-house: it's just the band and Glen playing on it. He's fitted right in."

Having previously recruited Gary Valentine and Frank Infante to Blondie's ranks, Clem is pleased to act as the talent spotter again. "I seem to get along with people musically as well as being mates with them," Burke explains. "Every once in a while, it's a knack that's needed in the band. I guess it's a combination of intuitiveness and a friendship with a lot of musicians. It probably helps that I have a one-dimensional attitude to pop music. It's always been good to me and it's my social world. I'm still a fanboy."

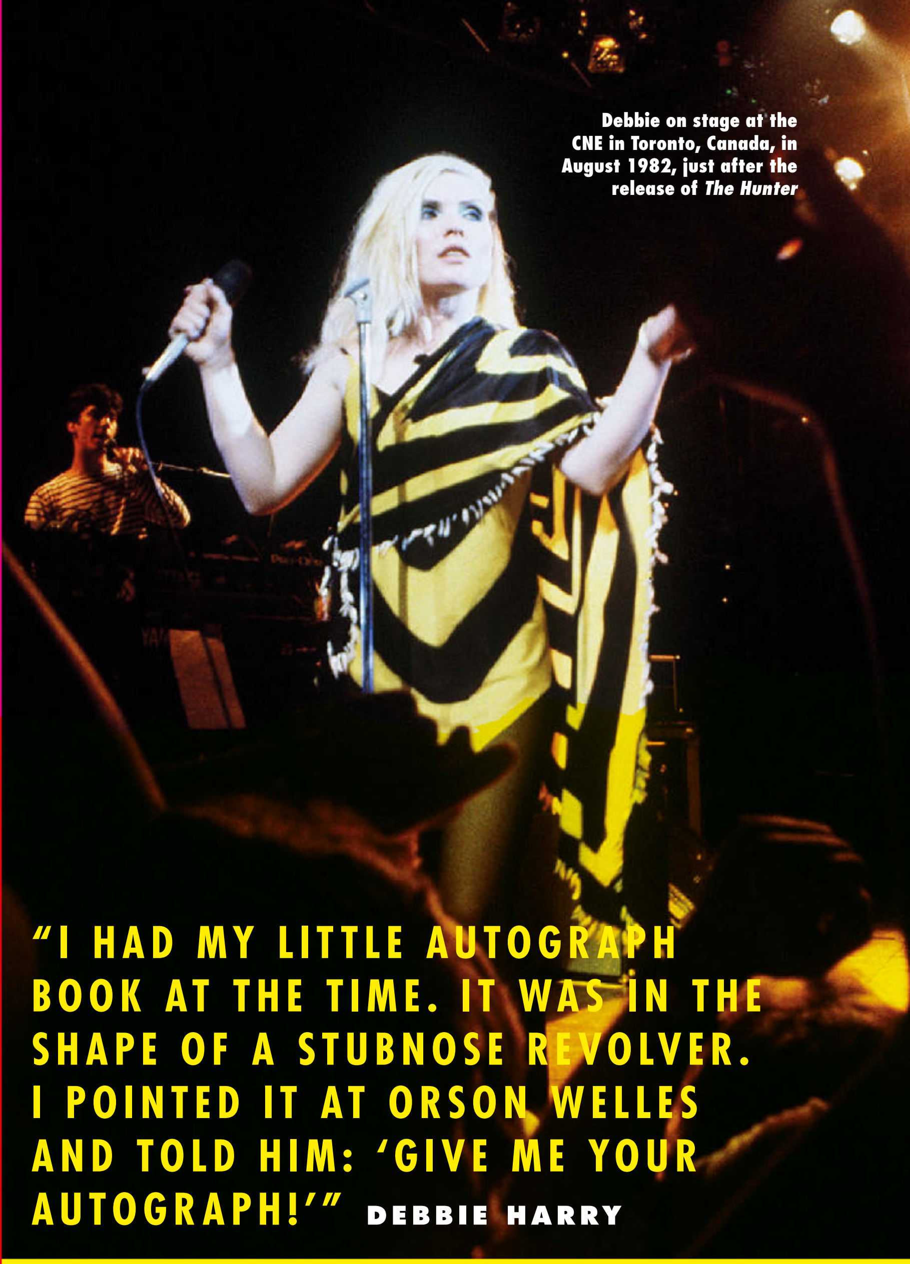
KOO, WHAT A SCORCHER

In the gap between *Autoamerican* and *The Hunter*, Debbie Harry released her debut solo album, *KooKoo*. Produced by Chic duo Nile Rodgers and Bernard Edwards, the LP was an inspired blend of disco, funk and rock which Chic would later hone on productions for David Bowie, Duran Duran and Robert Palmer.

But its cover, designed by *Alien* artist HR Giger, was banned by the London Underground for its imagery of Debbie with acupuncture needles through her face. *KooKoo* is reissued in October including remixes, and Harry notes: "I'm so pleased *KooKoo* is coming out again, as I feel the album was never really out there in the first place. There's a lot of great music on that record and I think it was ahead of its time. Nile and Bernard were wonderful producers, who later had a more successful confluence working with other artists."

The album baffled critics, but Debbie insists: "The press were the ones confused by *KooKoo*, not the fans. The fans never had a problem with the record. I still get fans asking me: 'When will you play *Under Arrest* at a Blondie show?' It was only the press and the decency patrol who were gunning for *KooKoo*."

Alongside the album reissue, Chris Stein's book of photos from the making of the album with Giger is published, *Giger: Debbie Harry Species*. Chris reflects: "I was very lucky to hook up with Giger. As with Mike Chapman, I learned a lot about being meticulous from Giger. I have a tremendous respect for his legacy. He was a terrific guy."



Debbie on stage at the CNE in Toronto, Canada, in August 1982, just after the release of *The Hunter*

"I HAD MY LITTLE AUTOGRAPH BOOK AT THE TIME. IT WAS IN THE SHAPE OF A STUBNOSE REVOLVER. I POINTED IT AT ORSON WELLES AND TOLD HIM: 'GIVE ME YOUR AUTOGRAPH!'" DEBBIE HARRY

worked out well for us, but there are so many things that influence a band which have nothing to do with music."

By fifth album *Autoamerican*, Blondie were seeing in a new decade with a change of approach. The quintessential New York band decamped to Hollywood, working at United Western studios, where Frank Sinatra and Elvis Presley recorded, as well as The Beach Boys making *Pet Sounds*. "Mike lived in L.A.," explains Debbie. "After two albums where he'd come to New York, it was time to meet Mike halfway. Also, it meant we could socialise with a totally different crowd to our regular crew in New York." Chris continues Debbie's theme, noting: "United Western had lobby rooms with glass doors, which were great for watching people walk by on the strip. If you got stuck with anything, you could relax by seeing all the crazy bullshit happening on the street outside."

Angels On The Balcony: Harry and Stein pose on their rooftop in New York, November 1980

© Getty

The studio was also good value for star spotting. A fan of the sitcom *Three's Company*, Debbie was delighted to bump into its star, Suzanne Somers. "I don't know why Suzanne Somers was in a recording studio, but she brushed past me one day in the corridor," recalls Harry. "I thought: 'Oh wow, *she* looks good!'"

Chris less fondly remembers cheesy crooner Perry Como, growling: "Perry fucking Como was in there." This is news to Debbie, who interrupts, asking: "Perry Como? Was he?" Chris responds: "Yeah, he was doing some fucking choir bullshit while we were trying to record *The Tide Is High*."

If the generation gap between *Some Enchanted Evening* and *The Tide Is High* wasn't enough of a headmelt, a further contrast was provided by another studio resident. United Western is where Orson Welles recorded voiceovers for his commercials for wine producers Paul Masson California. "I tried to squeeze past Orson Welles in the studio hallway," remembers Stein. "He was so gigantic by that point, that was hard to do. I don't think we interacted with him beyond nodding." Debbie interrupts, remembering her own moment with the director. "No, that's not right," she tells Chris. "Don't you remember, I had my little autograph book at that time? It was in the shape of a snubnose revolver. I pointed it at Orson Welles and told him (adopts stern voice): 'Give me your autograph!'" Debbie got her signature.

As enjoyable as their starry encounters were, Blondie were poleaxed when their label, Chrysalis, declared *Autoamerican* didn't have any hits. This, let's be clear, is an album containing *The Tide Is High* and *Rapture*. Record companies, eh? "By that point, we'd stopped guessing what was going to be a hit," laughs Clem. "I don't think even our record company knew what to make of us. In the States, we've had three No.1 singles: *Heart Of Glass*, *The Tide Is High* and *Rapture*. That's a dance song, a reggae song and, for want of a better term, a hip-hop song. You can't get three more different songs. Innovation is probably our greatest strength, but at the time we thought we were just playing around."

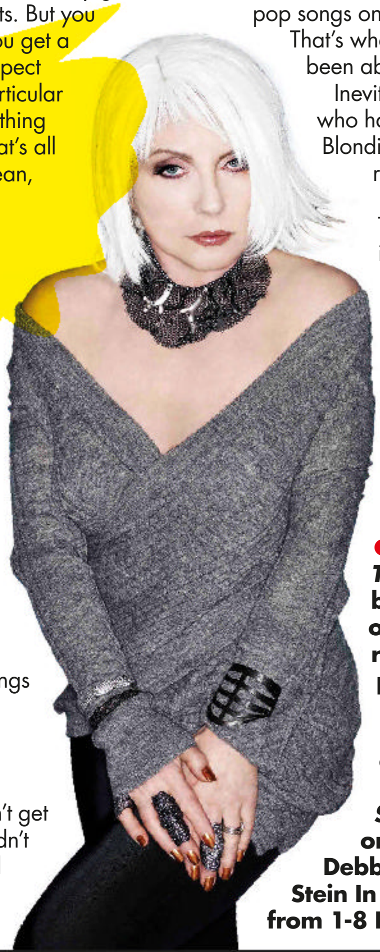
Nowhere was the playing around/innovation axis better explored than *Rapture*, the global smash credited with introducing hip-hop to the mainstream. Chris was especially excited by its potential: "We'd only heard a couple of songs on the radio, like *Rapper's Delight*. Then we started seeing some of the live hip-hop shows. Being exposed to all that was such an eye-opener. It was just *so* great."

Debbie agrees, but adds a caveat: "I only did one vocal take for *Rapture*. That was fine for the melody, but I'd have preferred more time on the rap. What was new about *Rapture* is that we approached it like a normal piece of music, at a time when rap relied on beats and samples and didn't have its own 'songs'."

It's that frustration at not perfecting something which Harry notes of the boxset's bonus material: "In those old demos, I hear bits and think: 'Hey, that's really good!' I'd like to develop some of those parts. But you always want to revise things once you get a different perspective. The exciting aspect for me is that it goes alongside a particular era and state of mind. If I hear something that could be improved on? Well, that's all shoulda, woulda, coulda, right? I mean, *Rapture* did pretty good anyway."

Even someone as laidback about their past as Debbie admits the final album from Blondie Mk.1 was a missed opportunity. 1982's *The Hunter*, which closes the boxset, was recorded after Debbie and Jimmy Destri made solo albums, while Chris went on to further his hip-hop adventures by curating the soundtrack to rap film *Wild Style*. Coming back to the group, none of the six Blondies could work out what *The Hunter* should be. "There was a lot of frustration within the band," admits Chris. "There was a lot of drug abuse by then, all sorts of shit. But, all things considered, there are some great songs like *English Boys* on that record."

Referring to the album's none-more-1982 sleeve, Chris sighs: "The concept was to present the band as half-human, half-animal. But we didn't get proper support and the cover just didn't get done properly. If *The Hunter* had a better cover, it would have been a lot more successful." Clem adds:



"Our biggest mistake was taking too much time off after *Autoamerican*. We hadn't got to the point we needed, even though we thought we had."

It would be 17 years before Blondie returned, sharp as ever on 1999's *No Exit*. There have been five albums from the new incarnation: a sixth will follow in spring. "Debbie doesn't like looking back," notes Clem. "It's so much better for Blondie that the boxset is out when we've just done a great UK arena tour and have finished the basic tracks for a new record. It's got a few classic pop songs on, but it's pretty eclectic. That's what Blondie has always been about."

Inevitably, it's Debbie who has the final word. "In Blondie's historic way, we're reaching into areas that are outside our norm. This new record? It isn't straight-line pop." Refusing to take the obvious route is about the only predictable aspect of Blondie's career. Here's to more classics from everyone's favourite disco-rap-reggae-punk-pop heroes. ■

● Blondie's *Against The Odds: 1974-82* boxset is released on 26 August and reviewed on page 86. Debbie Harry's solo album *KooKoo* is reissued on 14 October. *Giger: Debbie Harry Species* is published on 17 October. Debbie Harry And Chris Stein In Conversation tours from 1-8 November.

Clem Burke on the upcoming new 12th studio album: "It's got a few classic pop songs on, but it's pretty eclectic. That's what Blondie has always been about."

CLASSIC ALBUM

MUSIC FOR THE MASSES

DEPECHE MODE

35 YEARS ON FROM ITS RELEASE, WE REVISIT THE MODE'S GAME CHANGER – AN ADVENTUROUS, HEDONISTIC DRIVE INTO UNCHARTERED TERRITORY THAT BROUGHT THEM BOTH CRITICAL AND COMMERCIAL ACCLAIM

FELIX ROWE

Still the oddball underdogs, the Mode in 1987

There's only so long you can play the 'outsiders' card. Depeche Mode have built a career on it. Despite shifting 100 million records and filling stadiums the world over, they still to this day have never won a Grammy. Yet having finally scrambled their way into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2020 (third time lucky), the pretence is over. Depeche Mode are now firmly embedded in the establishment.

Back in 1987, however, when they called their sixth album *Music For The Masses*, they were still very much the oddball underdogs. Rather than a pompous display of arrogance, it was a barbed in-joke at their supposed commercial paucity (breaking news: Depeche Mode do gags). But it turns out the joke was on them: *Music For The Masses* became the self-fulfilling prophecy that propelled them into the big league Stateside, filling cavernous venues and inducing levels of adulation that would baffle commentators on home soil.

Arguably the best was yet to come – see 1990's *Violator* – but *Music For The Masses* was the point where critical acclaim and commercial success finally intersected. Everyone knows the back story: initially dismissed as lightweight upstarts, Depeche quickly rebounded to the other extreme, exploring increasingly darker terrain, experimental industrial sounds and kinky imagery. There was no shortage of cracking singles throughout. But, really, were they going to be booked to perform *Master And Servant* on *Saturday Superstore*?

Their wish to be taken seriously was granted with 1986's *Black Celebration*, which garnered cult acclaim and set the template for a new breed of doom-laden alternative rock (see Nine Inch Nails). But on *Music For The Masses*, the darkness, experimentalism and pop sensibility coalesced into a winning formula that both brought the acclaim the band craved and put bums on seats. Found sounds remained a fundamental part of the creative process. Crucially, though, they were kept in check within the greater whole.

FRESH IMPETUS

Music For The Masses was the group's first album without Mute Records mentor Daniel Miller playing a central role in its production: a mutual decision to hit the refresh button, with Miller increasingly busy on his label's wider roster. In the official making-of documentary, Martin Gore acknowledged the need for "some fresh impetus", while Miller noted it was a "breath of fresh air" and "a huge weight off my shoulders" to relinquish day-to-day responsibilities.

DARKNESS, EXPERIMENTALISM AND POP SENSIBILITY COALESCED INTO A WINNING FORMULA THAT BROUGHT THE ACCLAIM THE BAND CRAVED AND PUT BUMS ON SEATS

Various producers were mooted, with the band gravitating towards Dave Bascombe, who had recently engineered Tears For Fears' seminal *Songs From The Big Chair*. There's more than a passing resemblance between the moody atmospherics conjured on Tears For Fears' *Shout* and Depeche Mode's anthems for the dispossessed. Or, as Bascombe himself self-effacingly put it: "reverb".

In the official making-of documentary, Dave Gahan explains: "Dave [Bascombe] just seemed like someone we could get on with", while the sadly missed Andy Fletcher quipped: "Sometimes, you do need some new jokes, someone else to take the piss out of."

In a revealing interview from 2020 with YouTuber Vaughn George, Bascombe shared in-depth insights into the recording process. While credited as co-producer, Bascombe plays down his own considerable contribution to shaping the sound, suggesting he was principally employed to engineer, rather than to steer the creative direction.

By now, Depeche Mode were a well-established unit with a specific way of working. In the Vaughn interview, Bascombe speaks of being amused by the "weird" unspoken rules in the set-up. It wasn't his brief, he said, to challenge the status quo, and instead he assimilated himself into the workflow.

Much has been said about Depeche Mode's division of labour. Once Gore had written and demoed a song, it was left largely to keyboardist Alan Wilder and the producer/engineer to flesh it out in the studio. As George put it: "Martin was the architect and Alan

THE PLAYERS

DAVE GAHAN
The snake-hipped singer with the doomy baritone has used up more lives than the average tomcat. Andy McCluskey cheekily riffed on the Mode's division of labour – to paraphrase: Dave 'shut up and sing the songs' Gahan. Though in recent years, Gahan has established himself as a writer, both in the Mode and his collaborations with Soulsavers.

MARTIN GORE
The creative force, chief songwriter and occasional lead singer, Gore stepped up to the plate after the departure of Vince Clarke, ensuring Depeche Mode's five minutes of fame grew into a four-decade career.

ANDY 'FLETCH' FLETCHER
The enigma, his musical input could be described at best as minimal. But Fletch's role was even more important than that: he was the glue that held everything together. Sadly missed since his sudden death earlier this year.

ALAN WILDER
The consummate musician of the group and its unsung hero, Wilder puts flesh on the bones of Gore's songs. *Music For The Masses* in particular highlights the real contribution that Alan made to Depeche Mode during their imperial phase.

DAVE BASCOMBE
The co-producer and engineer, who mixed the album was brought in to help the group self-produce, following his work with Tears For Fears (*Songs From The Big Chair*) and Peter Gabriel (*So*). Bascombe helped open up their sound.

© Getty

THE SONGS

1 NEVER LET ME DOWN AGAIN

A bold statement of intent to kick off proceedings, the album opener (and second single) has all the hallmarks of a Depeche 2.0 classic: a driving beat, pulsing synths, chunky guitar, and, of course, the oblique Martin Gore lyric. A druggy hedonistic trip into oblivion, a homoerotic experience, or a bit of both… does it matter? So far so good, but it's that fantastic rousing orchestral climax that raises the track to a whole other level of greatness. Inspired symphonic samples, lifted from Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana*, demonstrate a growing musicality, sending *Never Let Me Down Again* into orbit.

2 THE THINGS YOU SAID

How to follow the ultimate banger? With the perfect comedown, of course. Gore delivers a slower, more atmospheric and understated post-apocalyptic ballad. Sparsely arranged, *The Things You Said* is built around a repetitive mournful vocal refrain, that recalls just a little bit of Morrissey in Gore's legato delivery. Critics might argue it never quite gets going, though it's an exercise in restraint. Sometimes, the notes you don't play are more important than those you do.

3 STRANGELOVE

The lead single has become a fan favourite and live staple – a lively four-to-the-floor synth romp destined for dancefloors. The single came out five months before the album, while sessions were ongoing. As a result, the version that appears on the LP is a decidedly different beast. Born out of a remix from Daniel Miller to simplify the arrangements and reduce a perceived sense of clutter, it's notably more stripped back and, by default, takes on a slightly darker edge. While both versions have their merits, many would say that this later interpretation, within the context of the wider body of work it's a part of, is the definitive incarnation.

4 SACRED

Opening with atmospheric sounds and sampled choir snippets, lyrically it's classic Gore thanks to the subversive religious imagery: "a firm believer and a warm receiver". Dave Bascombe wasn't entirely happy with the track, suggesting later that his original cassette rough mix was much better, and it wasn't as gritty and glam as it should have been. You can see where he's coming from – it could be more sleazy and less 'boppy', but don't let that detract from the great tune it is.

5 LITTLE 15

A curious choice of single. The jaunty, sampled and programmed orchestral arrangement evokes *Eleanor Rigby* for the synth-pop generation. It's a prime example of Alan Wilder's skill at taking the bare bones of a Gore composition and sprinkling his magic over the top. Bascombe has said that *Little 15* was classic Alan in his use of orchestra samples. Wilder himself has noted that *Little 15* initially proved challenging to structure and arrange, before finally slotting into place after taking inspiration from minimalist classical composer, Michael Nyman. Gore's ambiguous lyrics seem rather questionable, though the band have clarified it describes a conversation between a mother and her 15-year-old son about the challenges of growing up, going out and facing the world. Note the recurring road metaphors representing the idea of escapism.

6 BEHIND THE WHEEL

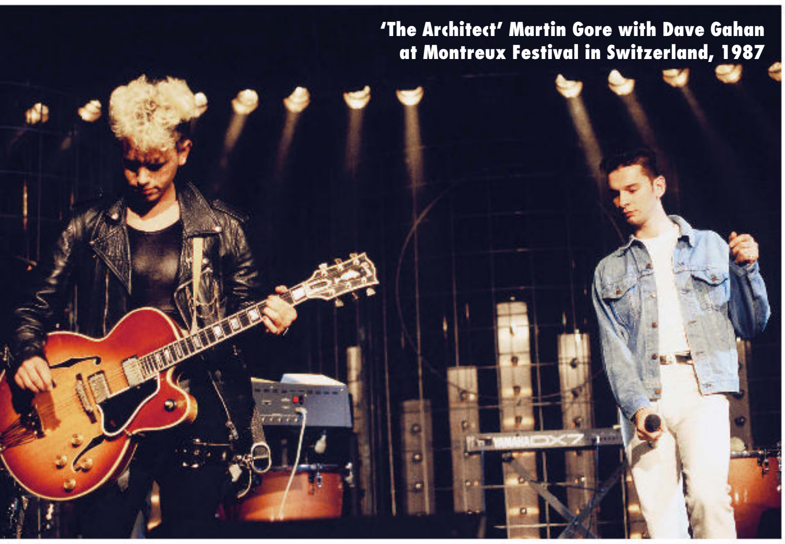
The third single taken from the album, *Behind The Wheel* features an interesting combination of uptempo club banger tempered by an almost sinister, unresolving chord sequence. Wilder explained the nature of this revolving pattern in the official making-of documentary: "It's this sequence of four repeating chords that never changes. It sort of reminds me of one of those optical illusion stairways, where you're walking up the stairway and you never get to the top. Once you get round, you're back at the bottom again… you can't stop it, and that's the beauty because of the driving analogy of the song." Compared to the single edit that cuts to the chase, the album version is much more drawn out, eking out the tension and atmosphere in a gradual climax, before eventually delivering on the promise, by dropping into those satisfying snare hits.

7 I WANT YOU NOW

Gore takes the lead vocal on this none-too-subtle smut-fest, that uses grunts and groans sampled from an adult film to create a groove. The creepy, heavy-breathing sound in the intro was created by pushing in and drawing out the air of an accordion, without playing the notes. This recording was then sampled into a then state-of-the-art Fairlight CMI 3, which happened to be available at the studio. Though a cutting edge use of sampling at the time – and no doubt responsible for raising more than just the eyebrows of its listeners – it now feels more akin to a cheap gimmick rather than risqué innovation. There's an argument here that this is what the skip button was invented for.

8 TO HAVE AND TO HOLD

Beginning with Russian radio samples that bleed in from the preceding track, a moody, foreboding synthesizer drone follows, before the minimal beat kicks in: a thud kick and a colossal crashing snare. A simple, repetitive vocal refrain from Dave Gahan carries one of Gore's more filthy and depraved lyrics ("I feel diseased, down on my knees" he intones like a dispassionate preacher delivering the Sunday sermon). From promising beginnings, *To Have And To Hold* feels a little unfinished – having gone to all that trouble creating the brooding



'The Architect' Martin Gore with Dave Gahan at Montreux Festival in Switzerland, 1987

© Getty

the engineer." Generally, Gore would only interject (through the intermediary Fletch) if he didn't like something.

In Bascombe's view, most of the band were bored by the nitty-gritty, meticulous nature of programming and the production process. The natural musician and studio whizz, Alan Wilder, however, positively thrived in it. "Someone has to be steering the ship," explained Bascombe, "and that was definitely Alan's baby… Alan had the vision."

Sessions began at Guillaume Tell, a converted Paris cinema, which proved fruitful owing to the range of orchestral instruments knocking about. Depeche spent the first few days wondering about banging objects to make percussive sounds – an established ritual to build up a bank of samples for later use. Work continued at Konk, The Kinks' London studio, before finishing up the recording and mixing at Puk studios in Denmark (the building was sadly gutted by fire in 2020).

Like so many electro pioneers, Depeche Mode straddled that curious space between the obligatory 'no guitars' rule and a love of stomping glam rock. That influence starts to come to the fore on *Music For The Masses*. Tellingly, the record kicks off with an isolated guitar riff, albeit

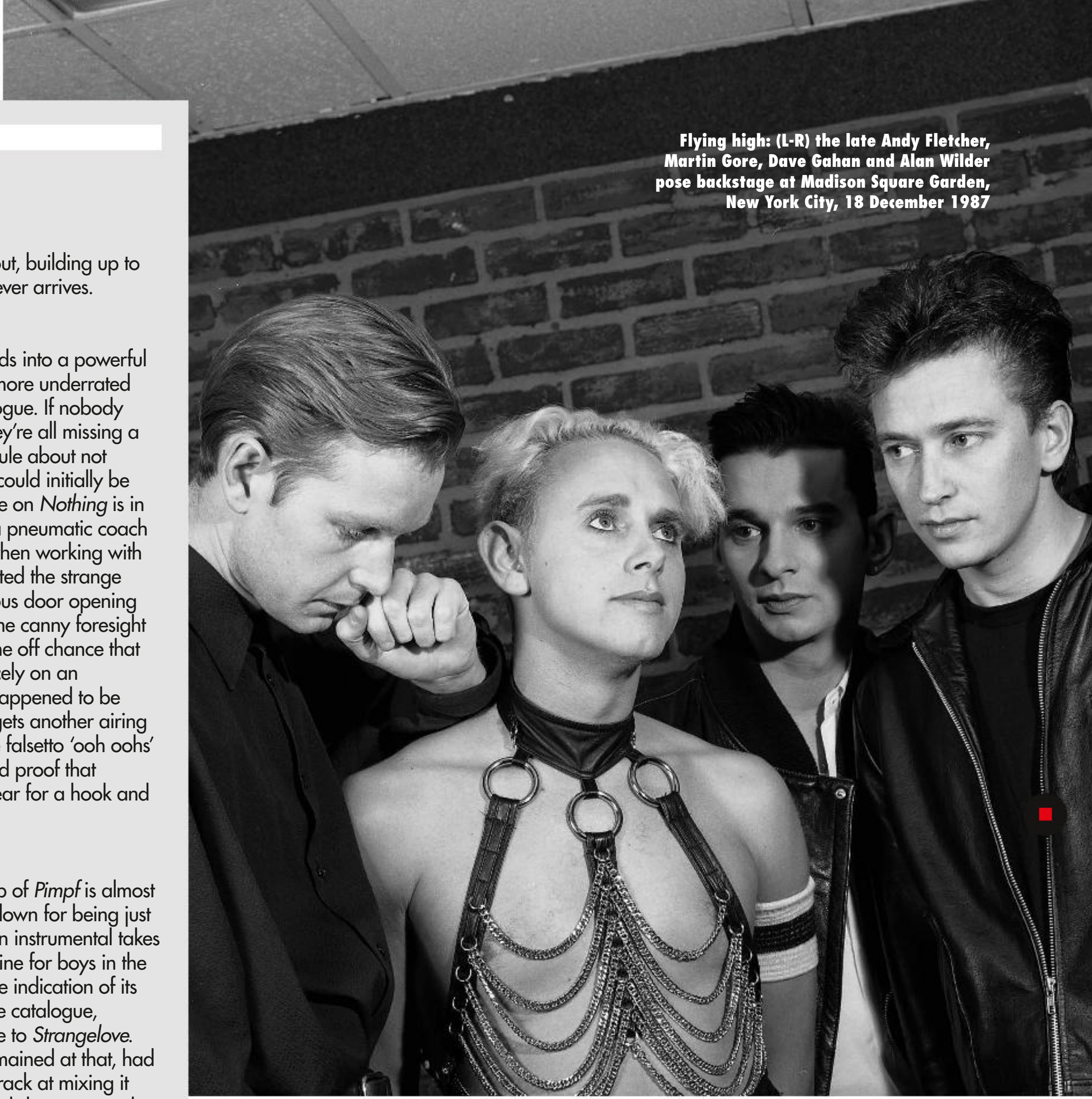
atmosphere, it rather peters out, building up to the big rousing chorus that never arrives.

9 NOTHING

An infectious nagging riff leads into a powerful electro number – one of the more underrated hooks from the Mode's catalogue. If nobody else has sampled this then they're all missing a trick. Depeche Mode had a rule about not using hi-hats, although what could initially be seen as an offending example on *Nothing* is in fact taken from a sample of a pneumatic coach door. Several years earlier, when working with another group, Bascombe noted the strange swishing sound of their tour bus door opening and closing. Luckily, he had the canny foresight to record it for posterity, on the off chance that one day it would fit rather nicely on an electro-pop masterpiece he happened to be co-producing. Gore's guitar gets another airing with a subtle chorus part. The falsetto 'ooh oohs' are pure bubblegum pop, and proof that Depeche Mode retained an ear for a hook and an eye on the charts.

10 PIMPF

The overblown operatic pomp of *Pimpf* is almost something Muse would turn down for being just too ridiculous. The Wagnerian instrumental takes its name from a Nazi magazine for boys in the Hitler Youth, which gives some indication of its general vibe. It's a curio in the catalogue, originally released as a B-side to *Strangelove*. Apparently, it would have remained at that, had Bascombe not had another crack at mixing it while the group were occupied shooting a video. It became their walk-out music for the ensuing tour, and succeeded in whipping the crowd into a frenzy. Wilder has spoken about many tracks on the record that build from humble beginnings into a big crescendo, and *Pimpf* is the archetype. He'd been listening to minimalist composers like Philip Glass at the time, though you wouldn't describe *Pimpf*'s bombastic climax as minimalist in any sense.



Flying high: (L-R) the late Andy Fletcher, Martin Gore, Dave Gahan and Alan Wilder pose backstage at Madison Square Garden, New York City, 18 December 1987

COME ALBUM SIX, DEPECHE LET THEIR ELECTRO PURISM SLIDE – THEY NO LONGER LET A PRINCIPLE GET IN THE WAY OF PROGRESSION

heavily processed and triggered by a sampler. Come album six, Depeche were prepared to let their electro-purism slide, a recognition that one can only get so far with synths and samples alone. Whether a sign of growing maturity, or just Gore's boredom with synths, they no longer let a principle get in the way of progression.

Gore's guitar work is never flashy – it's the antithesis of the widdly theatrics that dominated hair metal at that point. His simple, repetitive riffs just sit on a groove, adding another textural element and human grit into the mix. *Behind The Wheel*, for instance, is subtly enhanced by a few simple twangs from his Gretsch. These tentative steps laid the groundwork for a more dominant presence on later favourites – from *Personal Jesus* to *I Feel You*.

DIFFERENT DRUM

Elsewhere, the Mode continued their quest to source only the finest sounds. *Never Let Me Down Again*'s earth-shattering snare was lifted from Led Zeppelin's *When The Levee Breaks*. "As a kid I'd always thought that's the most fantastically exciting drum sound in the world!" Bascombe explained to Vaughn George. Bonham's gargantuan beat has since become one of the most sampled recordings in history, though Depeche's producer was one of the very first to repurpose it (pipped, of course, by the Beastie Boys' *Rhymin & Stealin*). Martin's voice was sampled, chopped up and reprogrammed to great effect on cuts including *Behind The Wheel* and grandiose closer, *Pimpf*.

A notable development of *Music For The Masses* is its epic, orchestral sound, enhancing the melodramatic, theatrical nature of the music – a combination of Bascombe's engineering nous and Wilder's classical influence and arranging qualities. The songs are typically structured around hypnotic cycles that build to a rousing climax.

Lyrically, Gore explores the open road, a recurring motif that evokes a sense of youthful escapism and adventure, while the driving metaphor plays into his fascination with sordid powerplay and who is in control. Always a source of speculation, the ambiguity of Gore's lyrics is heightened when filtered through Gahan's unflinching baritone, delivered straight without a knowing wink. To what extent is Gore condoning or condemning the acts of debauchery and depravity he describes? Is it perhaps another Gore in-joke: what are the filthiest words he can plant into his mate's mouth?

As interviews attest, Depeche Mode have a cheeky side lurking beneath the veneer of doom. Bascombe had imagined they would be as intense as their output, though he found the opposite to be true, remembering the fun as much as the recording, and highlighting a certain kitsch-ness to the tracks they worked on. Despite Andy Fletcher's bookish

appearance, it was he that apparently led the charge for nights out clubbing.

Gore had conceived the album title in advance of the sessions, providing a neat hook for the record's visual aesthetic. Cover art designer Martyn Atkins devised the idea of large-coned public address speakers broadcasting their message into open abandoned spaces. This is our grand statement, but is anyone listening? As it happens, quite a lot of people were.

The groundwork had been laid through US college radio support and Anton Corbijn's stark but humanising monochrome videos enjoyed regular rotation on MTV. They ended up playing for the masses, culminating in a huge show to 60,000 fans at the Pasadena Rosebowl, supported by fellow Brit pathfinders OMD, Thomas Dolby and Wire. The madness of the era is captured in D.A. Pennebaker's *Depeche Mode: 101* concert film; a pivotal moment, recently re-released for the first time on Blu-Ray in a deluxe package.

Field study: Depeche Mode get a breath a fresh air, 1987

© Shutterstock

THE FRENZIED REACTION STATESIDE COULD ONLY BE DESCRIBED AS AKIN TO BEATLEMANIA – AND EUROPE WAS EQUALLY ENRAPTURED

BEFORE THE CRASH

The frenzied reaction Stateside could only be described as akin to Beatlemania. OMD's Andy McCluskey has looked backed hilariously at that three-month tour, including the gentle rivalry between the bands which extended to spirited cricket matches featuring the crew on days off. Europe was equally enraptured. Bascombe compares the fervour of *Pimpf* blaring out of the announcement speakers opening a show in Paris as being like attending a political rally.

Depeche Mode had reached a new summit – though in hindsight, it set them up for the greater fall. In the ensuing years, things would unravel with various mental health struggles, communication tested to its limits, Wilder's 1995 departure and Gahan's infamous brush with death a year later.

But putting aside the numerous challenges that lay ahead, *Music For The Masses* is a showcase of the definitive Mode line-up, on top form and playing to their strengths – not least, Wilder's significant contribution to arranging and production.

Though regularly praised by fans, Wilder is very much the unsung hero of Depeche in wider perception, and *Music For The Masses* provides all the proof anyone would need of his skills.

Flanked by two classic Mode studio albums: *Black Celebration* from 1986 and *Violator* four years later, it deserves a place beside them as one of the band's finest, most consistent and fully-realised collections. ■

THE VIDEOS

STRANGELOVE

The Mode produced two different videos. The first was shot in monochrome by Anton Corbijn for the original single, featuring the band and various seductive femme fatale characters in Paris. The second (for *Strangelove 88*) was directed by Martyn Atkins in contrasting futuristic full colour. Filmed at Senate House in London, the band are lit up by slogans and graphics projected onto them, while Gahan sings into the red megaphone.

NEVER LET ME DOWN AGAIN

Directed by Corbijn in a grainy black and white monochrome, this opens with Gahan sitting beside an elderly man drinking out of tin cups. Gahan then drives a bubble car through the French countryside, intercut with shots of Gore playing the accordion. The band are seen running through the fields, falling to the ground. The album cover is echoed as Gore brandishes a huge megaphone speaker in the field.

LITTLE 15

Directed by Atkins, and shot in London, this features the Brutalist high-rise Trellick Tower (subject of many pop videos, films and TV shows). This time the monochrome takes on a pink tinge. Calendar pages, clocks and wristwatches are used as metaphors for the passing of time, while sped-up circular motions (Wilder winding forward a clock and stirring a spoon in a tea cup) accentuate the revolving nature of the song's arrangement.

BEHIND THE WHEEL

Directed again by Corbijn, this was shot in the same session as *Never Let Me Down Again*, and picks up where it left off. Gahan is hobbling through the field on crutches, before hitching a ride with a glamorous young lady on a moped, and later being transformed into a smooth Humphrey Bogart-eque character. Corbijn apparently introduced women into the videos to help visualise the interplay of romantic encounters, while the recurring announcement speaker theme returns once again.

NEW FROM LONDON RECORDS

Shakespears Sister

Hormonally Yours

30th Anniversary Editions

30 SEPTEMBER 2022
CD BOXSET / CD / DVD / WHITE VINYL / SPLATTERED GREY VINYL
LTD EDITION CATSUIT SEQUIN EDITIONS

shakespearssisterofficial.com

BLANCMANGE
THE NEW ALBUM PRIVATE VIEW

30 SEPTEMBER 2022
ORANGE VINYL | BLACK VINYL | CD | CASSETTE | DIGITAL
blancmange.co.uk

35 YEAR ANNIVERSARY EDITIONS

RARITIES, B-SIDES AND REMIXES

COLOURED VINYL | BLACK VINYL | DOUBLE CD | DIGITAL

7 OCTOBER 2022

thecommunards.com

Voice of the BeeHive Let it Bee

REMASTERED AND EXPANDED

COMING SOON

ECHO & THE BUNNYMEN
EVERGREEN
25 YEAR
ANNIVERSARY EDITIONS

LONDON RECORDINGS

londonrecordings.co.uk

londonrecordings londonrecs london_records londonrecordings

Back into Orbit: The uber-producer returns with his first studio album since 2014... *The Painter* finds him working on a new canvas

A BRUSH WITH GREATNESS

THE PRODUCER OF LANDMARK MUSIC FOR MADONNA, ALL SAINTS, BLUR, PINK AND BRITNEY SPEARS, MAVERICK MUSICIAN WILLIAM ORBIT ENJOYED AN INFLUENTIAL CAREER AS AN AMBIENT PIONEER, CLASSICAL REINVENTOR AND RAVE MAINSTAY. THEN HE ENDURED A CRISIS OF CONFIDENCE AND DRUG-INDUCED BREAKDOWN. AFTER EIGHT YEARS AWAY, WILLIAM IS BACK AND FINALLY READY TO ENJOY HIS SUCCESS. "I'M A POP TART FOR DIVAS" HE REVEALS...

JOHN EARLS

"I'm coming in from the cold," announces William Orbit, as he prepares to release his first album for eight years. Aware of the difference between his success as a megastar producer for the likes of Madonna, Blur and Britney Spears, and the eclectic nature of his career in ambient, rave and classical music, William smiles: "People always introduce me as: 'He's sold x million records,' but my own music is pretty niche. I've put myself in a slightly crass position with my new record, though, of thinking I'd like to get people to hear my stuff beyond the niche."

His career stats make for impressive reading, with 200 million records sold. Pink, All Saints, Robbie Williams, U2, Betty Boo, Beth Orton and Katie Melua have all enjoyed the help of a producer whose ability to capture joy and transcendence in music is unparalleled in virtually any era, but whose distinctive trance beats defined late-90s and early-00s pop thanks to *Ray Of Light* and *Pure Shores*. However, since releasing classical album *Orbit Symphonic*, ambient record *Strange Cargo 5* and remixing Queen, all in 2014, William disappeared.

Previously a scrupulous workaholic in the studio, Orbit decided to try cocaine for the first time at a party and found he had a horrifically addictive appetite for drugs. He was eventually sectioned. "I've been well again for two years," William smiles. "I'd need to check my diary for an exact timeframe, but I had a moment of thinking: 'Right, that was Part One of my life.' I'm not afraid of anything, but I won't be going back *there* again."

It's too easy to state that Orbit's new

album *The Painter* is the result of cleaning his life up. That sonic euphoria is back in full effect, helped by guest vocalists including Polly Scattergood, Ali Love, prodigious pop artist Georgia, pioneering Colombian singer Lido Pimentia, Ghanaian songwriter Gloria Kaba and a sample of late influential Tanzanian musician Hukwe Zawose, as well as previous musical partners Orton, Melua and Laurie Mayer.

William emphasises he'd continued to work during the bad times, stating: "I was never more than 20 yards away from my rig, and I went up a lot of blind alleys. I lost my confidence, but music was always forming. It wasn't like I suddenly decided: 'I'm going back into the game and start with a blank sheet.'"

However, there's a passage of such bliss in the opening Melua collaboration, *Duende*, that only William Orbit at his happiest could make it. "Thank you!" he beams when this is put to him. "I've seen enough bad shit and, yes, I wanted some joy. We like our artists to be mawkish and sad, but I don't necessarily believe they have to be broiling with sadness." Another delighted smile. "I'll be getting a tambourine out next."

It's easy to see how William could be an invaluable ally in the studio. He's wonderfully enthusiastic and fizzing with ideas, not just for music but for art, the BBC, travel and his new home in Venice. Tall and slim, he looks at least a decade younger than 65, with the air of a successful academic rather than a rave survivor. William and Laurie Mayer met in London's 80s squat scene, forming ambient band Torch Song. They were discovered by The Police's manager Miles Copeland and released two albums, but it wasn't until rave that Orbit began having mainstream success.

After early remixes for the likes of S'Express, William formed Bassomatic, a loose collective whose infernally infectious second single

Fascinating Rhythm reached No.9 in the UK in 1990. "I got so frustrated remixing people for the Rhythm King label," recalls William. "I thought, 'I can do this, too!' I was clued into the clubs, pirate stations and DJ-ing. But Rhythm King boss Martin Heath dangled the carrot of a record deal for too long, so I signed to Virgin instead. Martin's girlfriend told me that, when he learned I'd gone to Virgin, Martin broke his foot kicking his hi-fi in anger. I told him: 'Martin, you had me right there all along!'"

As its title implies, Bassomatic's debut album *Set The Controls For The Heart Of The Bass* was as indebted to Pink Floyd as The Beatmasters. While the singles *Funky Love Vibrations* and *Science And Melody* were solid bangers, the public seemed confused over what Bassomatic wanted to be. Orbit acknowledges: "Willie Richardson, the A&R at Virgin, gave me a firm handshake when I signed my deal and told me: 'Congratulations, you've given us a hit single with *Fascinating Rhythm*'," William smiles. "Willie was right, and I should have stayed on that path. But I wandered off track."

Orbit made four albums in the *Strange Cargo* series of aural travelogues, critically acclaimed but failing to match the success of fellow ambient travellers The Orb or The KLF. The one minor brush with the charts was *Water From A Vine Leaf*, a beautifully shimmering 1993 single featuring William's then-girlfriend: Beth Orton. "Beth's music is absolutely extraordinary," enthuses Orbit. "We're not in each other's pockets, but we've always been close. I admire her musicianship and her lyrics, and love the way that she puts a band together. Did I spot all of that when I met her? No. Watching Beth's career is a continuing delightful surprise."

At least William's production and remixing career continued to thrive, but his eclectic talents were so hard to pin down that, by 1997, Orbit didn't have a manager. "One firm I saw were so rude," he frets. "When I phoned them back, I could hear the boss stage-whisper: 'Tell him I'm not in'." Two months later, still without a manager, William was in Los Angeles producing *Ray Of Light* with Madonna.

Madonna's previous album *Bedtime Stories* was co-produced with Nellee Hooper, whose career Orbit had looked at in envy at the time. "I've never had an abundance of confidence in my artistry," William admits. "Imposter syndrome has been with me all along. I don't think I'm a real musician, because I need notes written in Sharpie to tell me what to play on the piano. I'm good on guitar, but I've always felt a fake.

"I'd see producers like Nellee Hooper and think: 'Look at that dude!' Nellee seemed to party every night in the south of France with a model on each arm. I'd wonder how he found the time to make the actual records. But the simple answer is, none of that matters a jot so long as the records sound good. That's how I finally feel about my own records now. Who cares about the musicianship? All that matters is what comes out of the other end. As for living a lifestyle like Nellee had? I've got as much glamour in my life as I want."

That balance between glamour and toil was epitomised by working with Madonna on one of the all-time great pop albums. "Madonna is *really* overlooked as a producer," Orbit emphasises, pointing out her own vital role in *Ray Of Light*'s sound has been neglected. "Madonna has never had the time to produce other people, but I learned so much as a producer from her. She's blasted her ears from 35 years of performing on stage, so her headphones are up loud, but her ears are ridiculously good. She's laser-guided and will spot any tiny sound. M knows how it all works in the studio, the same as she does with TV. What I learned from her was to keep batting away. I like to dive around from song to song, but Madonna would make me finish the song I least wanted to work on. She's brilliant at just getting things done."

William is surprised that Madonna is starting to work on reissues, beginning with the recent compilation *Finally Enough Love*, noting: "Madonna just doesn't look back. Everyone mentions glorious moments to her, and her attitude

"Her ears are ridiculously good. She's laser-guided": Orbit on Madonna's production skills

***The Painter* follows the epic electronica of Orbit's *Starbeam* EP, released in December 2021**

"I'VE NEVER HAD AN ABUNDANCE OF CONFIDENCE IN MY ARTISTRY – IMPOSTER SYNDROME HAS BEEN WITH ME ALL ALONG"

"I didn't know how to deal with that level of fame – I let it slip away": Orbit on life after *Ray Of Light*

LUCKY 13

The great rock album on William Orbit's production CV is *13* by Blur. The band's sixth record – featuring classic ballads *Tender* and *No Distance Left To Run* – has become the critics' favourite Blur LP over time, much to the surprise of its producer. "What the fuck is *that* about?" is Orbit's startled response when *13*'s canonisation is mentioned. "I had terrible imposter syndrome making that record. I thought: 'Stephen Street has produced all this classic stuff for Blur, and we've just jammed. How is anyone going to like this?' I thought it'd be hated."

William praises Damon Albarn's songwriting skills, laughing: "His demos are a different matter. When I get a demo from Damon, I think: 'This cannot be serious. I cannot hear a tune in there, this is an indulgent muddle.' But, in a short period of time, they become the most exquisite melodies that you've ever heard. Damon has uniqueness in spades: his compositional skills are extraordinary, and he can make one vocal track sound like an army. One vocal from Damon can also sound like a choir."

The pair publicly fell out when William was initially due to take on production duties for Blur's 2012 comeback single, *Under The Westway*. But Orbit insists: "There have been three times when Damon has been a bit of a ct to me. I'll do something for him and he dicks me around. But, after those c**ty episodes, I still love him as much as ever. I've got all the time in the world for Damon and I always love seeing him."**

was always: 'Oh, that old thing? Great, but I'm doing something new.' The remix by Sickick on TikTok of *Frozen* that Madonna embraced was exciting, because I've got half an eye on doing a Dolby Atmos mix of *Ray Of Light*."

William has "masses of DATs" from the album sessions that could go towards a deluxe edition, as Madonna wanted everything to be recorded, which chimed with Orbit's own ethos. "During hours of studio time, if something marvellous does happen, you'd better capture it," he smiles. "A lot of what you hear on *Ray Of Light* are moments captured when we didn't really know that the tape was rolling."

The album's legendary title track is "one big jam," according to Orbit: "Madonna likes things very planned out, whereas my whole life is one big improv session. The synth in *Ray Of Light* was jammed and Madonna was loving it. She started jamming this insanely brilliant vocal, two semitones above her normal range. I got that tape out again recently. At the end, M is so delighted with what she's done that she cracks up and starts singing the chorus as an opera: 'Aaaand I feeeel!' I could do an hour-long radio show on just that song. Madonna would rag me all the time in the studio, and it's all on tape. I'd love to do an edit of her best insults at me! Her workrate, though – it's second to none."

The success of *Ray Of Light* propelled William's career, but he reflects: "I didn't know how to deal with that level of success. A cleverer person than me would have gone: 'You've won the lottery! You've made a record everyone loves *and* made a shitload of money. Stop right now with all the remixes. Get a plan together to take it to the next level.' But I never did. I let it slip away."

Working with the biggest names in pop wasn't slipping away from an outsider's perspective, and at least Orbit's imposter syndrome didn't prevent him from guiding more superb records from megastar names. "I'm very confident in having an answer ready in the studio," he reasons. "I've been confident in my creativity since forever. But whether anyone else will get it? No. I knew some songs were great when I was making them: *Water From A Vine Leaf*, *Ray Of Light*. But even *Pure Shores* for All Saints, not a clue. I remember in the studio thinking: 'Oh my God, this is a *turd*. How am I going to deliver *this* to the label tomorrow?' I'd been working on it for two months and had totally lost sight of its potential."

Having made so many great albums, William's advice to budding producers is simple and practical. "Working with someone as super-famous as Britney Spears is exactly the same in the studio as an unknown," he notes. "It's the artist's project, and they're in charge. They know what they want, and they just want to know that you're there." To that end, Orbit won't go for a coffee or even to the toilet without letting the artist know first. "I don't ever want the artist to look up to the control room and see that I'm not there," he explains. "That's the primary role of a producer: be there. When it's the artist's project, they

need to be able to be in the moment and know that it's being recorded by someone who's listening. Don't ever neglect them."

Now that he's back making records, William is reluctant to make a return to producing, as the work finding the right studio and equipment for artists is almost as time-consuming as creating the music itself. He says: "As much as I love producing, it'd hold me up from the freewheeling life I'm in now. But if I got a call from Cher or Shakira asking to twist my arm, I'd say: 'I'm twisting it for you already,' because I'm a pop tart when it comes to working with divas."

William's freewheeling life includes a new fascination with painting, hence the title of *The Painter*, which Orbit created the sleeve for. "It's not like I'm a great painter," he smiles. "Still, what better way to get my art out there than on a beautiful vinyl sleeve?"

Fittingly, Beth Orton was the initial inspiration for the album. Her vocal on the closing *No Other World* was the first piece of music that felt a potential thread for *The Painter*. "A lot of the guest vocals were recorded by the singers, because of geography and lockdown," William explains. "You could hear dogs barking and kids in the background. That doesn't matter, because they're such heartfelt performances, and I can clean up any 'atmosphere'. This is a record that's going to stick around, I think."

William was able to work with Georgia in the studio. She is the daughter of Leftfield founder Neil Barnes, whose duo started on William's label, Guerrilla. "Georgia is *phenomenal*," says Orbit. "She can play anything. I've worked on one of her new songs, which I was meant to play bass on. Georgia asked me how the bass worked. I showed her and, within minutes she'd got it. She was playing piano, pounding away on drums and suddenly she was great on the bass. I thought: 'I don't need to be here. I'll just check we're rolling and that the recording light is on!'"

Aware that eight years away is a lifetime in pop terms, William hopes *The Painter* will find a new generation of fans, revealing: "This album isn't too stylistically wedded to anything, so maybe Gen Z or Gen Alpha will get to know me. Their parents have probably played my music to them. The strangest comment I get from young people is: 'I was conceived to your music.' That's an incredible honour, but I don't ask for details! I also get told – especially for *Pieces In A Modern Style* – that parents play my music to calm fractious children. If you're having a terrible evening when your kids are driving you nuts and my music remotely calms them down, then my work here is done. That's incredibly precious to hear."

Currently working on a piano-based version of *The Painter* in the vein of his classical epic *Pieces In A Modern Style*, Orbit is determined to enjoy himself much more this time round. "I've had a lot of new acts in my life," he summarises. "Appearing on *Top Of The Pops* with Bassomatic, Madonna… I appreciate it all now more than ever, though. Absolutely. I want to share that appreciation with people, in the hope they don't have to wait as long as I did."

After creating sonic joy for decades, it's only fair that William Orbit now gets to bathe in happiness himself from here on in.

"I'VE HAD A LOT OF NEW ACTS IN MY LIFE: APPEARING ON *TOP OF THE POPS*, BASSOMATIC, MADONNA… I APPRECIATE IT ALL NOW MORE THAN EVER"

● *The Painter* is released on 26 August via Rhino and reviewed on page 81

Broad strokes: Budding artist Orbit painted the sleeve image for his new album

Other-worldly: Beth Orton set Orbit's new project in motion, with guest vocalists recording their parts remotely during lockdown

ALL SAINTS AND SINNERS

During the time that William Orbit was unwell, he was able to work on one released album. All Saints' most recent LP *Testament* in 2018 reunited them with the producer for the first time since *Saints And Sinners* 18 years earlier, with Orbit working on semi-title track *Testament In Motion* and the album's second single, *After All*.

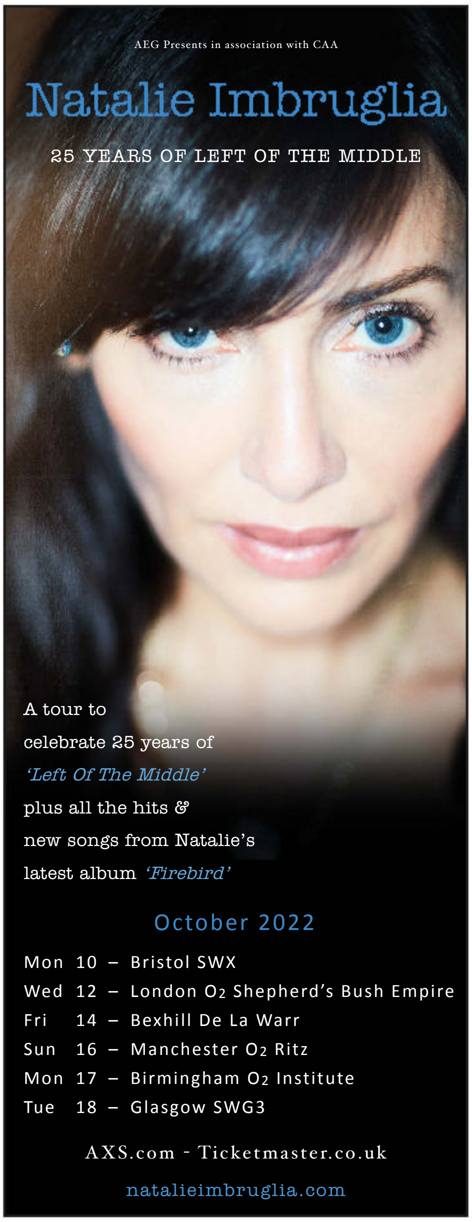
"I went into *Testament* not in a great space," admits William. "But working with Shaznay Lewis is always wonderful. I'm such a fan of Shaznay: as a person, as a singer, of her voice. She has a wonderful vibrato, and I love Shaznay's warmth and passion. We worked on *Testament In Motion* at my house, from a very raw track of this beautiful song that Shaznay had sent me. Then she took it to the band."

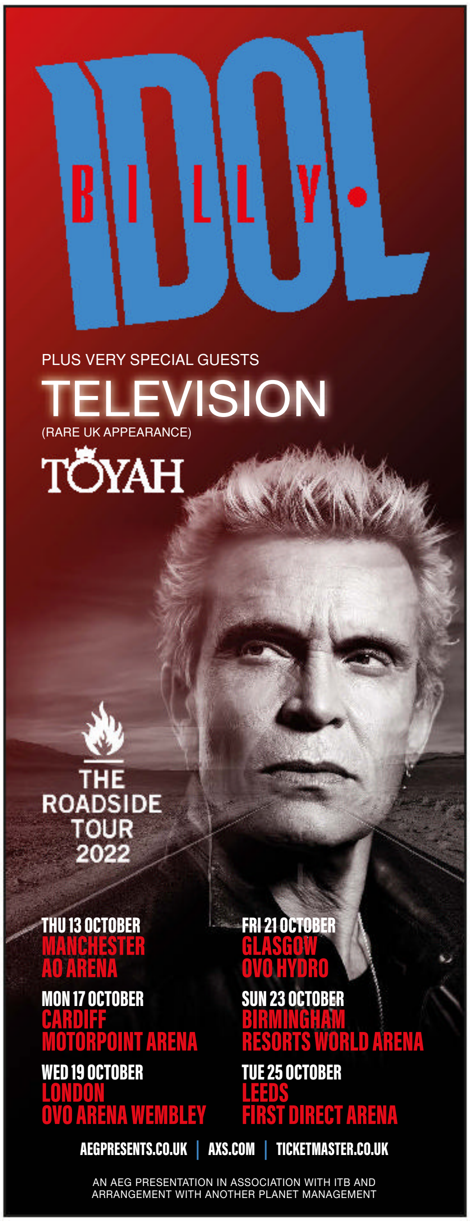
There's a significant pause, before William reveals: "I might as well say it. I love managers. But All Saints' structure? I didn't care for it. I don't think it was in the best interests of the band. It wasn't the fault of me, Shaznay or anyone in the band. I just think that, with the right motivation, that could have been a No.1 record."

Orbit would still love to work with Shaznay, saying: "Shaznay, if you're reading this: call me. The bad news is, you'll have to come to Venice. Take a gondola from Venice Airport, down some side canals to Campo San Polo and there'll be a door opening in the dark. That'll be me with a candle. Welcome aboard!"

DREAMWORLD
PET SHOP BOYS THE GREATEST HITS LIVE
★★★★★ THE TIMES | THE GUARDIAN | DAILY TELEGRAPH | METRO | NME
JUNE 2023
17 LONDON OVO ARENA WEMBLEY
21 ABERDEEN P&J LIVE
23 LIVERPOOL M&S BANK ARENA
24 LEEDS FIRST DIRECT ARENA
PETSHOPBOYS.CO.UK
AEGPRESENTS.CO.UK | AXS.COM | TICKETMASTER.CO.UK | SEETICKETS.COM
AEG PRESENTS IN ASSOCIATION WITH ICM PARTNERS

AN EVENING WITH
DEBBIE HARRY & CHRIS STEIN
IN CONVERSATION
MODERATED BY
ROB ROTH
AEGPRESENTS.CO.UK
AXS.COM
TICKETMASTER.CO.UK
AEG PRESENTS BY ARRANGEMENT WITH SOLO
NOVEMBER 2022
TUESDAY 01
LONDON PALLADIUM
THURSDAY 03
GLASGOW ROYAL CONCERT HALL
SUNDAY 06
BIRMINGHAM TOWN HALL
TUESDAY 08
MANCHESTER BRIDGEWATER HALL


AEG Presents in association with CAA
Natalie Imbruglia
25 YEARS OF LEFT OF THE MIDDLE
A tour to
celebrate 25 years of
'Left Of The Middle'
plus all the hits &
new songs from Natalie's
latest album 'Firebird'
October 2022
Mon 10 – Bristol SWX
Wed 12 – London O2 Shepherd's Bush Empire
Fri 14 – Bexhill De La Warr
Sun 16 – Manchester O2 Ritz
Mon 17 – Birmingham O2 Institute
Tue 18 – Glasgow SWG3
AXS.com - Ticketmaster.co.uk
natalieimbruglia.com


BILLY IDOL
PLUS VERY SPECIAL GUESTS
TELEVISION
(RARE UK APPEARANCE)
TOYAH
THE ROADSIDE TOUR 2022
THU 13 OCTOBER
MANCHESTER
AO ARENA
FRI 21 OCTOBER
GLASGOW
OVO HYDRO
MON 17 OCTOBER
CARDIFF
MOTORPOINT ARENA
SUN 23 OCTOBER
BIRMINGHAM
RESORTS WORLD ARENA
WED 19 OCTOBER
LONDON
OVO ARENA WEMBLEY
TUE 25 OCTOBER
LEEDS
FIRST DIRECT ARENA
AEGPRESENTS.CO.UK | AXS.COM | TICKETMASTER.CO.UK
AN AEG PRESENTATION IN ASSOCIATION WITH ITB AND ARRANGEMENT WITH ANOTHER PLANET MANAGEMENT

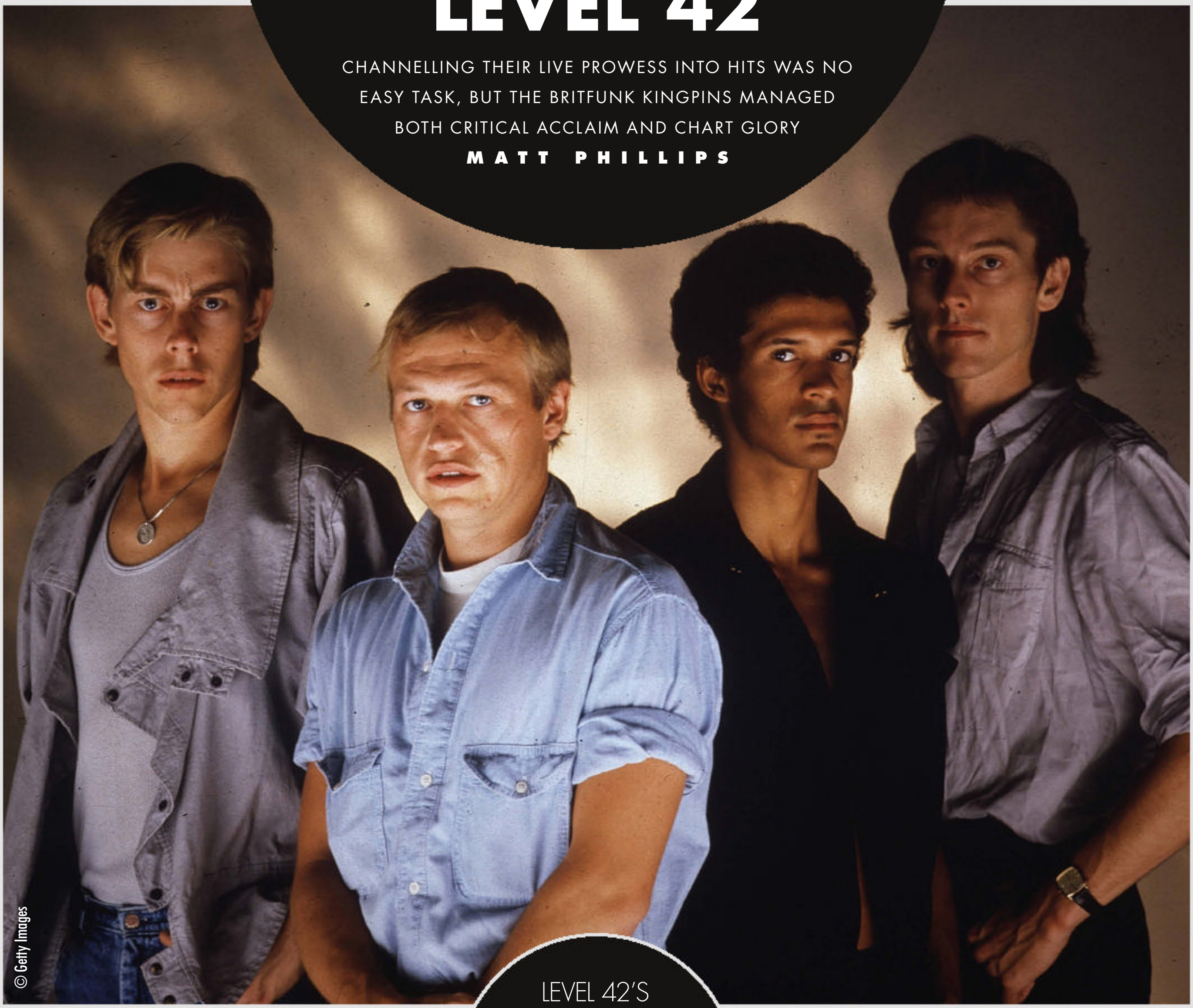
LEVEL 42
LESSONS IN LIVE 22 TOUR
Plus Special Guest
mari wilson
NOVEMBER 2022
Friday 4
HASTINGS
WHITE ROCK
Tuesday 8
NORTHAMPTON
DERNGATE THEATRE
Saturday 5
TORQUAY
PRINCESS THEATRE
Wednesday 9
SWANSEA
ARENA
Sunday 6
LLANDUDNO
VENUE CYMRU
Thursday 10 / Friday 11
LONDON INDIGO
@ THE O2
LEVEL42.COM • AEGPRESENTS.CO.UK • AXS.COM • TICKETMASTER.CO.UK
AEG PRESENTS IN ASSOCIATION WITH UNITED TALENT AGENCY

ALBUM BY ALBUM

LEVEL 42

CHANNELLING THEIR LIVE PROWESS INTO HITS WAS NO EASY TASK, BUT THE BRITFUNK KINGPINS MANAGED BOTH CRITICAL ACCLAIM AND CHART GLORY

MATT PHILLIPS



© Getty Images

LEVEL 42'S DEBUT WAS A STRIKINGLY ASSURED LUSH RECORD WITH JUST ENOUGH NODS TO THEIR LIVE SOUND

A strong live following on the Isle Of Wight and in the Home Counties' nascent Britfunk scene, plus an album recorded for an indie label (of which more later), had led Polydor Records in hot pursuit of gifted young four-piece Level 42: Mark King on bass/vocals, Mike Lindup on keyboards/vocals, Rowland 'Boon' Gould on guitar and Phil Gould on drums.

A five-album deal was brokered and the lads quickly embarked on recording their major-label debut with legendary Bluesbreakers/ Fleetwood Mac producer Mike Vernon, based at Chipping Norton Studios in the Cotswolds.

After further sessions at London's Red Bus, Marcus Studios and the apparently very haunted Vineyard studios, the result was an irresistible mix of funk, jazz, pop, rock, soul and Latin – a strikingly assured, lush and tasteful record, with just enough nods to the band's kinetic live sound on instrumentals *Heathrow, Dune Tune* and *"43"*. The former was written and arranged by guest keyboard player and 'fifth member' Wally Badarou, late of Grace Jones' epochal *Nightclubbing* album, who would become a hugely important figure in the Level 42 story.

Lead single *Love Games* gave Level 42 a Top 40 hit and also a *Top Of The Pops* debut in April 1981, a first chance for the general public to witness Mark's prodigious slapping technique on prime-time TV. *Turn It On* and *Starchild* were also subsequently released as singles, though both just missed out on the Top 40.

Elsewhere, *Almost There* was a propulsive, meticulously arranged slice of pop-fusion, destined to be a live favourite, and proto neo-soul *Why Are You Leaving?* was the band's first outstanding ballad with Mark emerging as an expressive vocalist. *Level 42* was also graced with an iconic cover; artist Joy Barling Loyla enlisting her sister Kim to pose as the 'princess' that would quickly become an unofficial band logo.

Although Polydor and the group were pleased enough with the album's UK chart placing of No.20, and despite the success of the attendant live dates (including a spell opening for The Police), there were still rumblings that Level 42 wouldn't last beyond 1981. First, King and Gould undertook session work with CBS's hotly-tipped Leisure Process, then the bassist was almost headhunted by Jeff Beck to form a new power trio at the end of the year. Thankfully, the guitarist was quickly headed off by Alan Sizer, Polydor's A&R chief, and Mark was persuaded to stay another day.

LEVEL 42
Released 1981
Label Polydor
Chart Positions
UK No.20 NLD No.5

By the time Level 42 came to write and record their second album *The Pursuit Of Accidents* at the beginning of 1982, plenty of water had passed under the bridge in a very short period of time.

The March release of *The Early Tapes* gave some pause for thought but now the pressure was on: Polydor had high hopes for more hit singles but the band, particularly Gould, was in no hurry to jettison their reputation as hot-shot musicians and a dynamic live act.

As a result, the songs weren't exactly flowing out of the rehearsal rooms, and the quartet also wanted to take a more hands-on approach to producing their own records. However, after a short period of experimentation, it was deemed that Mike Vernon should be rehired as producer. The resulting album was a tantalising progression from *Level 42*, a much darker affair than the debut, though again with a very pleasing mix of slick pop and funk. Some more ambitious tracks even hinted at prog rock.

Although, with deadlines looming, Gould in particular was under pressure to provide lyrics at very short notice. He came up with the goods on *Eyes Waterfalling* (inspired by a Hermann Hesse story) and the excellent opening single *Are You Hearing (What I Hear)?*, though was later slightly embarrassed by the infectious No.24 hit *The Chinese Way*.

Still, King and Gould remained a gold-standard rhythm section, emphasised by their electrifying interplay on near-single *Last Chance*, and Lindup was emerging as a true team player and provider of that ethereal falsetto influenced by George Duke and Philip Bailey. The title track and *Shapeshifter* were attractive instrumentals, the former edited down from a 20-minute jam session then layered with sundry keyboard and percussion overdubs, while Joy Barling Loyla's cover artwork was another winner.

The Pursuit Of Accidents climbed to No.17 in the UK albums chart soon after its September 1982 release, a decent enough commercial result, but there was a sense that Level 42 were learning how to be a 'song' band on the job; at heart still very much a live act who thrived on group interplay, improvisation and stellar musicianship.

A MUCH DARKER AFFAIR THAN THEIR DEBUT, THIS STILL INCLUDED A PLEASING MIX OF SLICK POP AND FUNK

THE PURSUIT OF ACCIDENTS
Released 1982
Label Polydor
Chart Positions
UK No.17 NLD No.27

Early 1983 looked like business as usual in the Level 42 camp when they adjourned to London's Marcus Studios with producer Wally Badarou to lay down *Out Of Sight, Out Of Mind*. Then came the exciting news that Earth, Wind & Fire's bassist Verdine White and keyboard player Larry Dunn were keen to work with the band.

On paper, this seemed a superb fit – Level 42 and Polydor were desperate to make more headway in the States, while the American pair wanted to tap into the extraordinarily successful British scene (one week in July 1983 featured no less than seven singles from UK artists in the Billboard Top 10).

The Los Angeles sessions for *Standing In The Light* took place at Maurice White's Complex Studios, and a good time was had by all. However, potential hits weren't exactly flying out of the traps – the band seemed more interested in musically-arresting, highly original mixes of funk, rock and fusion, as on *The Machine Stops* (with lyrics inspired by E.M. Forster's novella of the same name), *A Pharaoh's Dream (Of Endless Time)* and *Dance On Heavy Weather*, plus Phil and Mike's quite personal, relatively downbeat material (the title track, *I Want Eyes, People*).

However, with help from L.A. songwriting royalty Allee Willis and percussionist Paulinho Da Costa, *Micro-Kid* emerged as a frontrunner, and then, during the final sessions for the album, *The Sun Goes Down (Living It Up)* sprung forth from a studio jam in White and Dunn's absence (they were attending a Prince gig at the Universal Amphitheatre) on 28 March 1983.

These were definite 'bacon-saving' songs, as the band liked to call them – the former reached No.37 in the UK charts, the latter No.10. But neither single made any dent in the States and the same fate befell the album, though *Standing In The Light* was a solid success in the UK, reaching the Top 10 and eventually going gold via worldwide sales.

This was all music to Polydor's ears, but disturbingly schisms were developing within the band that would only increase as the 80s rolled on.

A GOOD TIME WAS HAD BY ALL – HOWEVER, POTENTIAL HITS WEREN'T EXACTLY FLYING OUT OF THE TRAPS

STANDING IN THE LIGHT
Released 1983
Label Polydor
Chart Positions
UK No.9 SWE No.25

When Polydor signed the band in December 1980, Level 42 had already laid down a rough-and-ready album for Elite Records in two sessions during the previous March and August. Elite was an indie label set up by two enterprising Harlesden record shop owners, Andy Sojka and Jerry Pike. Those early sessions had spawned two decent-selling singles licensed out to Polydor – *Love Meeting Love* (which saw the whole band 'audition' for the lead vocals, King eventually getting the vote) and *Wings Of Love* – as well as a white-label 12", *Sandstorm*. All were lapped up by the DJs and young fans flying the flag for the emerging Britfunk scene. The former two singles made it into the UK Top 100, and, as a result, Polydor then bought the band out of their Elite contract, paving the way for the March 1982 release of *The Early Tapes*.

The album was filled out with a selection of excellent originals heavily influenced by Herbie Hancock and Stanley Clarke. *Mr Pink* and *88* became live favourites, while *Autumn (Paradise Is Free)*, *Woman* and *Theme To Margaret* (a tribute to King's late grandmother) showcased the band's infectious blend of funk, jazz, soul and Latin influences. Wally Badarou also supplied otherworldly synth, already a crucial element to Level 42's sonic imprint.

STRATEGY/ THE EARLY TAPES
Released 1982
Label Polydor
Chart Position
UK No.70

Though Level 42 had loved their Stateside experience, they were adamant about recording *True Colours* in Britain. That wish was granted by Polydor, and the band also got their first choice of producer, Ken Scott, who'd worked with many of their heroes including The Mahavishnu Orchestra and Jeff Beck.

A heavier sound than usual emerged via sessions at Martin Rushent's Genetic Studios in Berkshire (where they played table tennis with Billy Mackenzie) and Parkgate in Battle, East Sussex, with guitarist Boon making more of a musical contribution than ever.

As usual, though, singles were somewhat of a problem, so King dug up a rough demo from 1980 which had been powered by a Moog bassline and drum machine that sounded like something akin to Kraftwerk jamming with Stevie Wonder. The band worked up a new arrangement, combined it with a very primitive version of sampling and devised the rip-roaring *Hot Water*. It was a breakthrough song for Level 42 but only reached a disappointing No.18 in UK when released a single in August 1984.

However, there were a myriad of musical and lyrical high points on the album, particularly the propulsive *True Believers*, Jimi Hendrix tribute *My Hero* (originally a bonus track) and the Arthur Koestler-inspired *Hours By The Window*.

TRUE COLOURS
Released 1984
Label Polydor
Chart Positions
UK No.14 NLD No.12

Early 1985 saw major changes in the Level 42 camp. Manager John Gould – brother of Phil and Boon – was sacked over a misunderstanding regarding the demo of a vibrant new track called *Something About You*. Then there were still grumblings about the low chart placing of *Hot Water* and, though their live following was still exceedingly strong, they were playing the same venues year after year.

At Polydor's urging, Mark King took more control, demanding that songs structures be worked on long before entering the studio. The result was their most successful album to date, but also one that drove a wedge between King and Gould, the latter of whom began to resent both the band's reliance on technology and his own lack of input at the mixing stage.

However, no-one was complaining about the product: everything about *World Machine* worked, from its pristine, layered sound, courtesy of co-producer Wally Badarou and engineer Julian Mendelsohn – collaborator on Frankie Goes To Hollywood's record-breaking *Relax* and *Two Tribes* singles as well as Nik Kershaw's *Human Racing* and *The Riddle* albums – to the striking cover photo of an Icelandic mountain range.

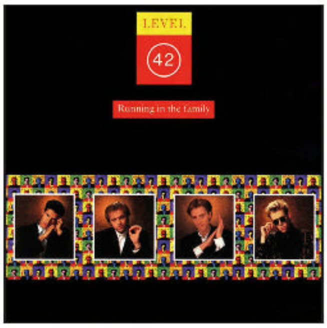
EVERYTHING ABOUT *WORLD MACHINE* WORKED, FROM ITS PRISTINE, LAYERED SOUND TO THE STRIKING COVER PHOTO

Physical Presence (Phil was particularly irked that Polydor left off the 'A' at the beginning of the title), the irresistible, samba-tinged title track, epic ballad *Lying Still* and moving single-that-never-was *Good Man In A Storm* were sonic delights, and there were also two exceptionally strong singles to boot – *Something About You*, a UK No.6 in September 1985 and later also a US Top 10, is still seen as a bona fide classic 80s A-side, while *Leaving Me Now* was the latest in a run of excellent ballads, reaching a somewhat disappointing UK No.15.

After a few false starts, the band were also finally embracing the video age – director Stuart Orme's promo for *Something About You* was their best to date, costing a pricey £40,000 but undoubtedly helping their accessibility to the general public.

World Machine had done the trick and finally put Level 42 into the big league, at least in the UK – now it was a question of maintaining that success. Easier said than done.

WORLD MACHINE
Released 1985
Label Polydor
Chart Positions
US No.3 US No.18



With Polydor extending the band's contract and clamouring for hits, *Running In The Family* began with the recording of three potential singles at London's Maison Rouge studios in March 1986: *Lessons In Love*, *Children Say* and *Freedom Someday*. The former immediately sounded like a smash to everyone, and it duly did the business when rush-released in April 1986, reaching No.3 in the UK and becoming Europe's second-biggest-selling 7" of that year. The band could then relax a little and focus on their busy live schedule, including a headlining Glastonbury gig that summer.

The album was completed with two further bouts of recording during July and December 1986. The title track – whose gauche lyrics and chugging 'rock' groove very much divide opinion – became its second single and another big hit during February 1987, before the LP itself finally followed in March, a full 18 months after *World Machine*. *Running In The Family* was an immediate success, rising as high as No.2 in the UK listings, but in many respects felt like an inferior facsimile of their previous breakthrough album.

RUNNING IN THE FAMILY WAS AN IMMEDIATE SUCCESS, BUT FELT LIKE A FACSIMILE OF THEIR PREVIOUS BREAKTHROUGH ALBUM

While *Children Say*, *Lessons In Love* and *Freedom Someday* would probably make most fans' best-of playlists, there was a lot of filler, too – *The Sleepwalkers*, *Fashion Fever*, *It's Over* and *To Be With You Again* might have featured some superb rhythm-section interplay and state-of-the-art keyboard sounds (and the latter two did provide further hit singles) but all generally felt undercooked and inferior to similar tracks from *World Machine*.

The strain was telling within the band: the brothers Boon and Phil Gould jumped ship in September and December 1987 respectively, exhausted by the touring schedule and – in Phil's case – ground down by the commercial responsibilities being placed at the group's door.

It was a sad end to seven glorious years of the original Level 42 line-up.

RUNNING IN THE FAMILY
Released 1987
Label Polydor
Chart Positions
UK No.2 US No.23

Mark King and Mike Lindup might have been forgiven for taking a breather after losing two such talented and beloved bandmates in Boon and Phil Gould at the end of 1987. But, after a debut tour to Israel and the Far East, they ploughed on quickly with studio album number eight in the company of new drummer Gary Husband, a child prodigy who Mark had seen playing drums on TV at the age of 16, and guitarist Alan Murphy, already an established session player with Go West, Kate Bush and Scritti Politti.

Taking a year out of the UK for tax reasons, King and Lindup wrote and rehearsed most of *Staring At The Sun* in Dublin during January and February 1988, with lyrical contributions faxed in by Boon.

They then spent four weeks at Chateau Miraval in Le Val, southern France, to record their heaviest, most guitar-based album yet, inspired by a desire to finally 'break' America, outlined in the hilarious *Fait Accompli* documentary.

This time around there was less emphasis on instrumental solos and light-hearted or eccentric lyrics, more on good drum sounds and increasingly in-your-face vocals from Mark.

THIS TIME THERE WAS LESS EMPHASIS ON INSTRUMENTAL SOLOS, MORE ON IN-YOUR-FACE VOCALS FROM MARK

This new approach initially seemed to pay off: Side One featured two serviceable singles, *Heaven In My Hands* and *Take A Look*, both blessed with memorable choruses and quite ambitious song structures, but the album was weighed down with less-than-essential, somewhat portentous material such as *Over There*, *I Don't Know Why*, *Two Hearts Collide* and the title track.

Sadly Mike's solo composition, *Silence*, also flattered to deceive, though *Tracie*, *Man* and the closing instrumental *Gresham Blues* contained enough musical flourishes and melodic interest to hold the attention.

Staring At The Sun was predictably a big hit in the UK upon its release in September 1988, matching *Running In The Family*'s peak chart position, but it missed the mark completely in the States.

This was a hard pill to swallow for both Polydor and the band, precipitating a fracturing of that relationship, a situation that had been on the cards for some time.

STARING AT THE SUN
Released 1988
Label Polydor
Chart Positions
UK No.2 US No.128

The tragic death of guitarist Alan Murphy in October 1989, the breakdown of Mark King's first marriage, the release of the *Level Best* greatest hits collection and Mike Lindup's debut solo album *Changes* all necessitated a reset for Level 42 at the dawn of the 90s. Their reaction was to downsize. Mainly sticking to a basic three-piece, with Mark, Mike and Gary Husband appearing alongside principal guests Wally Badarou and guitarist Allan Holdsworth, songs were stockpiled at King's Isle Of Wight studio, with contributions from outside lyricists for the first time in the band's history.

However, when delivering *Guaranteed* to Polydor in September 1990, Level 42 received a shock – their paymasters demanded they go back to the drawing board, write some new songs and try again. Enough was enough – manager Paul Crockford negotiated the band's release from the contract and they signed with RCA.

The resulting album was an engaging, if overlong, return to form. The breezy title track channelled *Lessons In Love* while *Overtime* and *My Father's Shoes* were also likeable singles, though neither set the charts alight. Husband also questioned RCA's recruitment of US superstar mixing engineer Tom Lord-Alge, who added some radio-friendly sonic heft to *Guaranteed* where perhaps a lighter touch was needed.

GUARANTEED
Released 1991
Label RCA
Chart Positions
UK No.3 NLD No.7

The new generation of jazz-funk acts making waves on the 90s UK scene – Brand New Heavies, Jamiroquai, Galliano et al – had to some extent been influenced by Level 42's sound, so it was ironic that *Forever Now* returned the favour.

The album was notable for the return of Phil Gould on drums, who co-wrote every song bar one. Wally Badarou seemed particularly inspired by the return of his old friend, contributing both guitar and vocals alongside his trademark keyboards. Mike Lindup returned to the Fender Rhodes for the first time in a decade, and also co-penned *One In A Million*, his finest vocal and songwriting contribution to the Level 42 catalogue thus far.

The irritatingly jaunty title track, co-written by Living In A Box mainman Richard Darbyshire, was a minor hit but wasn't representative of an impressive, relatively downbeat album, underrated on its March 1994 release and ripe for rediscovery. Other standouts include *Romance*, *Talking In Your Sleep* and *Love In A Peaceful World*.

FOREVER NOW
Released 1994
Label RCA
Chart Positions
UK No.8
NLD No.24

Level 42's 11th studio album was another reunion of sorts, but not in the form that it was initially intended – the original four-piece band plus Wally Badarou had met up at Mark King's Isle Of Wight home studio in early 2002 for a four-day writing session, but nothing came of it.

So, after five years of middling solo success, Mark reignited the Level 42 name and took charge of creating a new studio album, co-writing every track and singing lead vocals throughout. However, all four original members (though not Wally) did eventually contribute to *Retroglide*; Boon provided the lyrics, Mike played keys on a few tracks, and Phil made an uncredited contribution to *Ship*, the album's standout song, which also featured an excellent Boon guitar solo.

But, generally, the record was a downer, featuring far too many mid-to-slow-tempo, rock-inflected ballads, with Gary Husband's drums sounding uncharacteristically leaden. In the final analysis, the best thing about *Retroglide* is Alan Brooks' cover artwork.

RETROGLIDE
Released 2006
Label W14/ Universal
Chart Positions
UK No.78
NLD No.92

BARING THEIR TEETH

THE REID BROTHERS RETURN WITH A "DON'T BORE US, GET TO THE CHORUS" BITE ON THEIR MOST POLITICAL ALBUM TO DATE. "THE TURBULENCE OF THE TIMES ARE AT LEAST AS GREAT NOW AS THEY WERE IN THE LATE 60s OR EARLY 80s" THEY TELL US...

IAN WADE

A dozen albums in, the Reid brothers are still the angry young men in spirit

The Proclaimers are angry. Fuming, in fact. They're mad as hell and not going to take it anymore.

Despite this fact, both Craig and Charlie Reid are perfectly cheery when they catch up with *Classic Pop*. Instead, they've poured all their frustration and ire into their new studio album, *Dentures Out*. The twins' 12th LP swipes at a toothless Britain in thrall to nostalgia, feckless newspaper barons, pop legends touring the Butlins circuit and gloomsome Sundays growing up with Calvinist puritanism. It's a furious and often hilarious blast of satire and despair clocking in at just 36 minutes. *Dentures Out* is their most in-your-face work, which is impressive considering they've never knowingly shied away from speaking their mind.

After 2018's acclaimed *Angry Cyclist* album took Trump and Brexit to task, *Dentures Out* continues in a similar vein. "I think it's probably

the most political record we've done down the years," reckons Craig, the chief songwriter of the 60-year-old brothers. "I mean, it wasn't designed like that. Songs just came out the way they did. I think it's mostly political or satire, or observation of what's going on around us just now. It's probably got – for the first time on a Proclaimers record – a theme running through it, which is 'the past'. It's certainly an anti-nostalgia record – there's a lot of looking back." Charlie agrees: "It's about people constantly looking back and the idea of the world being better in the old days, of a different kind of Britain."

One line that particularly stands out comes from *The World That Was*: "There's been no death of satire/ There's more, not less/ When 'Thank U NHS'/ Is painted on a Spitfire". It's one of the most astute observations of a country gone slightly mad. "My mother was a nurse her whole working life, and the concept of a Spitfire with 'Thank U NHS' on it was ghastly," fumes Charlie. "The idea that you go and applaud people risking their lives throughout the pandemic was sick. I think nostalgia is stronger than it was when I was a child. I don't know why the British seem so fond of the past. We're not looking back nostalgically, and *The World That Was* is definitely an anti-nostalgia song."

There's only one track, *What The Audience Knew*, that breaks the three-minute barrier. Although not a conscious decision, Charlie summarises the album's ethos as: "Getting in, saying what you wanted to say and then getting out." He continues: "This is one of my favourite records, because of the punchiness of the songs and the directness of the message." As Craig says: "They're not short songs by design, but I think once you get to the stage where you've said what you want to say in a song, we didn't think we needed to add anything."

That brevity goes back to the twins' childhood. "The first records I remember hearing as a child, very few of them were three minutes: most of them were two, two-and-a-half-minutes," Craig recalls. "Listening to a lot of stuff from the 50s or 60s, into the early 70s, 'long' meant three, three-and-a-half minutes." So, it's 'Don't bore us, get to the chorus'? "Pretty much!" laughs Charlie.

Dentures Out was begun before the first lockdown. The Reids admit that not being able to see each other was unusual. "There were long periods where we couldn't rehearse at all, which was fairly difficult." says Craig. "That was the hardest part for me," Charlie agrees. "It was the longest that we've ever spent apart. It was difficult, but we just rehearsed when we could. We observed the protocols and tried to get on with the writing process."

The duo's ability to create earworms is in rude health, especially on *News To Nietzsche*, which manages to pack in Superman's sexuality and allotments that grow pronouns in under three minutes. "The song is just a collection of phrases, it isn't actually about anything," explains Craig. "It was the last one I wrote, and it took three days, which for me is very quick. I'd already started writing the lyrics, and saw something in the paper that said Superman was engaged in a kiss with a guy. I later found out from [producer] Dave Eringa that the story was actually meant to have been about Superman's son, but the line was already on there. I was laughing when I saw it, so I stuck that in. As for the lines about pronouns – it's a thing now, isn't it? You see badges all the time and it's become a frenzy, almost an obsession with certain members in society, which is taken very, very seriously."

Warming to his theme, Craig continues: "It's something that in the past, literally would have been laughed out of court. But now it's very serious, and I know to a lot of people, it means a lot to them. I just thought about the idea of growing new pronouns in an allotment and it made me laugh."

The twins' ability to craft short, sharp songs is not averse to a bit of a flourish, pushing the boat out with a full orchestra on *Things As They Are*. How did that come about? "Dave's big on strings," reveals Charlie. "We're currently finding a way to play that one live, and sometimes it segues into *Sunshine On Leith*, because there's a similarity in the key. They're very different songs, but there's a similarity in the spirit of the two."

Things As They Are is also very angry and it's fair to say the twins are no fans of newspaper proprietors. "The newspaper owners and those who own the media, the way they control and set the narrative, yet pretend they're neutral is shocking," reckons Charlie. "Brexit was a

© Murdo Macleod

HITTING THE MANIC BUTTON

A notable guest star on *Dentures Out* is Manic Street Preachers frontman James Dean Bradfield, who plays guitar on two songs – the title track and *Things As They Are*. The introduction came about via the album's producer, Dave Eringa, who also worked with Bradfield. "Dave's known James since, I think, the first couple of singles that Manic Street Preachers did. He's been with them on and off over the years," says Charlie. It turns out the collaboration could have materialised much sooner, as Charlie reveals: "We'd talked about doing it on the previous album and it just never happened. This time, we sent James some tracks and he decided on the ones he wanted to do. He came down for the day, played brilliantly and then we sat and had a curry."

Recording in Wales helped cement the deal. "Dave said James wanted to pop down because he lives in Cardiff," Craig explains. "Dave asked us: 'Would you like him to nip along to Rockfield? Maybe he could play on a couple of things' and we said 'Yes!' I think it was James' first time actually playing on a session, you know, like a session musician. He seemed a bit nervous at the start then settled into it and his playing was absolutely fantastic."

Were the brothers fans of the Manics before? "Everything I'd heard by them I'd always liked and the main thing for me was James' voice, but I hadn't realised just how brilliant a guitar player he really was until he sat down with us." raves Charlie, with Craig adding: "I obviously know all the hits and watched them over the years, and I've been impressed by them politically as they're very astute."

product, in many ways, of the right-wing press – of 30, 40 years of anti-EU stuff," adds Craig. "Boris Johnson himself was a product of the right-wing press: *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Spectator*, they backed him all the way through. I think that the power the press still wield in this country is astronomical. It's not a thing that can make or break you straight away, but I do think that it's a drip, drip thing. Newspapers themselves are dying on their feet, but it's going online and people are still reading, so the press still does have a great deal of power. I don't know if it's worse in Britain than other countries, but I think they certainly have always shaped the political agenda here, and continue to do so."

© Murdo Macleod

Having come out of an era when politics was never far from the charts with acts like Communards, The Housemartins and The Style Council among many others, it must surprise the brothers that there isn't the appetite for political pop these days. "Frankly I'm amazed," admits Charlie. "The turbulence of the times are at least as great now as they were in the late 60s or early 80s. In fact, I would say probably more. The dearth of good political writing, for want of a better term, there seems to be a lack of anger. There's plenty of personal anger, but in terms of the more thoughtful political songs, they're notable by their absence."

Craig concurs with his brother's puzzlement, adding: "It does mystify me, why there are no more political songs in the charts. I think with what's happened in the last probably 15 years, you don't have to be massively engaged in politics. You just have to have a passing interest. I think there's so much you can write about what's happening right now. I think it's going to happen for the next few years, as well. I do find it strange there aren't more people making political songs."

Charlie continues: "Harry Styles is going to be No.1 no matter what, but it'd be nice if people could take songwriting in a different direction. Not for the sake of it, just because they feel it and they allow themselves to express that, without editing themselves or worrying about what radio is going to think."

Well aware of the irony, *The Recent Past* contains the line: "80s popstars who thought they would last/ Now at Butlins can be seen". Surely the twins have been offered to play the holiday camp and nostalgia festival circuit themselves? "We have!" acknowledges Craig. "But as I say in the song, 'Please keep it for me'. Just because we've never done them, doesn't mean we never would. It's not something we choose to do, but you never know what's around the corner." Charlie points out sagely: "It's interesting that bands who were big at that time and thought they had longevity, a lot of them didn't, sadly. Who knows, maybe we'll end up doing them ourselves."

"IT DOES MYSTIFY ME WHY THERE ARE NO MORE POLITICAL SONGS IN THE CHARTS. THERE'S SO MUCH YOU CAN WRITE ABOUT WHAT'S HAPPENING RIGHT NOW."
CRAIG REID

As *Praise* confirms, The Proclaimers are suspicious of anniversaries. However, 2023 marks 40 years since The Proclaimers' formation as a band. Seeing as *Dentures Out* has an anti-nostalgia theme, are there any plans to celebrate? "We're definitely aiming to tour Australia and New Zealand next year, then Canada after that," says Craig. "We'll be doing more stuff through the summer and autumn next year. There are no plans to be marking 40 years of Proclaimers, but we'll certainly be working." Charlie is more reflective. "We don't really mark anniversaries, we just carry on playing," he adds. "At this age, you realise there are many more years behind you than ahead of you, so it's good to make the most of it while we can."

After two years of being holed up due to the Covid pandemic, The Proclaimers are itching to get back out there and see their fans again.

"The first gig we played a few weeks ago was in Stoke-on-Trent and it was really, really powerful," Craig confirms. "I didn't appreciate how much I'd missed it. It was quite a moving experience for me personally." Charlie concludes: "To us, the live thing is what it all revolves around. One, you prize it because you know you're getting older and two, you prize it because it's been denied to yourself."

The Proclaimers, then: still angry, still funny and still brilliant.

● ***Dentures Out* is released on 16 September via Cooking Vinyl. Read our review on page 83.**

The World That Was: Craig Reid on stage at Edinburgh Playhouse in December 2015, pre-Covid

"HARRY STYLES IS GOING TO BE NO.1, BUT IT'D BE NICE IF PEOPLE COULD TAKE SONGWRITING IN A DIFFERENT DIRECTION WITHOUT WORRYING ABOUT RADIO"

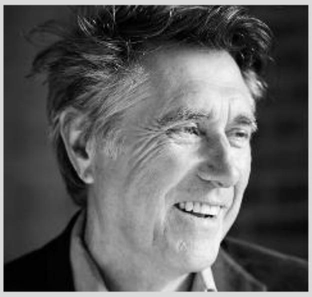
CHARLIE REID

Best of the best: (L-R) Phil Manzanera, Bryan Ferry, Andy Mackay, Brian Eno, Rik Kenton and Paul Thompson

© Brian Cooke

TRACK-BY-TRACK

The Best of Roxy Music



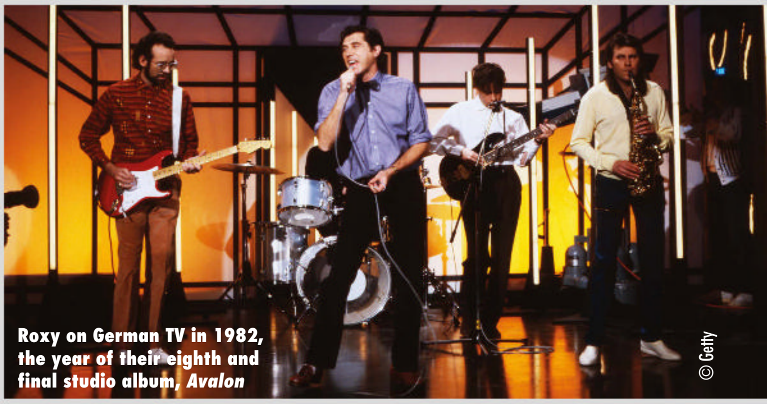
BRYAN FERRY GUIDES US THROUGH THE CAREER-SPANNING COMPILATION OF THE LEGENDARY ART-ROCK INNOVATORS

STEVE HARNELL

From the incorporation of electronic textures into a rock band format that informed the likes of Japan and Duran Duran to the melodicism drawn upon by The Cure, Siouxsie And The Banshees, as well as vast swathes of sophisti-pop bands, Roxy Music were amongst the most influential acts of their era.

They lit the touchpaper for all manner of switched-on artists that followed in their wake and it's that significant contribution which is celebrated on a reissue of their career-spanning *The Best Of Roxy Music* compilation, released on vinyl for the first time to mark the band's 50th anniversary.

In 2019, Duran Duran's Simon Le Bon and John Taylor famously inducted Roxy Music into the coveted Rock & Roll Hall of Fame; the pair described the band's appearance on *Top Of The Pops* in August 1972 to perform debut single *Virginia Plain*. Taylor outlined Roxy's creative palette which drew upon "funk, country and western, rock and roll, German experimental music, doo-wop, all hybridised into something entirely new. This was all-encompassing pioneer lifestyle branding, an entire genre all



Roxy on German TV in 1982, the year of their eighth and final studio album, *Avalon*

© Getty

unto itself." Le Bon added: "The subsequent journey of Roxy Music piloted by the open-heart surgery that was Bryan Ferry's lyric writing would take us deep into emotion and romanticism. A body of work that fulfilled every promise of the electric rock era."

Now, Bryan Ferry personally leads us through that body of work as he delves into *The Best Of Roxy Music* track-by-track…

1 AVALON

"*Avalon* was the last song to be recorded on the last Roxy album. I was in New York and we were recording at the Power Station – we really loved working there. Before the last day of recording, I was up all night completing the lyrics. We had the music in place so it was just me and [producer] Rhett Davies going in with [engineer and mixer] Bob Clearmountain on a Sunday afternoon, a sleepy day in New York. In between takes, I went out to the coffee machine in the hallway and heard this beautiful voice from another studio. It was a band from Haiti and the singer was Yanick Étienne. She came and did a scat vocal on our track and it was just magical – one of those great moments you have when you're recording where everything just works out. I remember Phil Manzanera and Andy Mackay turned up later and we were listening back and they were blown away. It was a great moment."

2 MORE THAN THIS

"I was trying to say as much as possible with few words here. I felt that the music was saying a lot and didn't need much else. I started writing it while on the west coast of Ireland. I think that brought a touch of melancholy to the *Avalon* album."

3 JEALOUS GUY

"We had a show in Dortmund a few days after John Lennon died and wanted to do something as a tribute. The audience there seemed to like it very much, so when we got back to London we recorded it at Phil's studio. Now people really expect to hear it every time I or Roxy perform. It worked, it's a great song – a beautiful direct kind of writing."

4 OVER YOU

"We recorded *Over You* in Phil's studio with Rhett Davies producing. Phil and I wrote it together quite quickly; we used a rhythm box, I played bass and Phil played guitar. It was all very spontaneous, and it ended up as our first single from the *Flesh And Blood* album."

5 SAME OLD SCENE

"We'd become interested in drum machines and sampling etc and our producer Rhett Davies played a big part in the sound of this record with the triggered strings. Basing Street Studios in Notting Hill was a good change of scene for us. The great bassist Alan Spenner is on this track as well as most of the *Flesh And Blood* album."

6 OH YEAH

"I thought it was a good idea to write a song about a song. I wanted to create a picture of Americana, with long hot summers, drive-in movies and radio stations. Wistful and nostalgic was the mood. Rhett Davies produced it at Island Studios. Paul Carrack guested on keyboards with [guitarist] Neil Hubbard, Alan Spenner and [drummer] Andy Newmark as the rhythm section."

7 ANGEL EYES

"Co-written with Andy Mackay. We didn't think the album version on *Manifesto* was quite the right thing so we re-recorded it as a single featuring harp as a lead instrument. Alan Spenner played memorable bass and Luther Vandross stars as one of the backing singers."

8 DANCE AWAY

"I had tried to do this song on previous solo albums, *In Your Mind* and *The Bride Stripped Bare*, but couldn't get it right. This time it seemed to work better with the band and with Rhett Davies producing. A friend of mine in New York suggested we give the track to Bob Clearmountain to mix who had just done some great records with Chic. Bob made it a hit and he became our go-to mix engineer."

9 BOTH ENDS BURNING

"John Gustafson played a great bass part on this record – he says he was inspired by Martha And The Vandellas' *Dancing In The Street*."

10 LOVE IS THE DRUG

"I wrote this song with Andy Mackay and it was a big record for us. Up to then we still felt like a kind of underground band but this brought us more universal acceptance, especially in America. The brilliant John Gustafson played a wonderful bassline which Nile Rodgers acknowledges as being a huge influence on Chic's *Good Times* and many other great records. We worked very late hours in those days, and when I'd come back from the studio I'd be walking across this gravel to my front door and that sound effect ended up on the record."

11 OUT OF THE BLUE

"Co-written with Phil Manzanera, the song begins with beautiful oboe by Andy Mackay and ends with a marvellous electric violin solo by Eddie Jobson who also played the great stirring string parts on the record. We liked to use tape phasing and this was something I guess our producer friend Chris Thomas had discovered in his days with The Beatles. Chris didn't work on this record but his great engineer/collaborator John Punter took over as producer."

12 ALL I WANT IS YOU

"I wrote this with Phil Manzanera. It's a guitar-based track so it has a different flavour from most of my other songs which are usually written on piano. I was beginning to enjoy songwriting collaborations within the band. John Punter was one of the great engineers at Air Studios – he was the life and soul of this album [1974's *Country Life*] and helped us to produce it."

13 MOTHER OF PEARL

"I went to Greece for a week or two with [close friend] Simon Puxley and that's where I started the songs for *Stranded*. I wrote *Mother Of Pearl* on the bass guitar. It's a song in two parts – fast and slow. It's one of my favourites. I remember Chris Thomas recording my vocal in Air Studios when I got back to London. I managed to do it in one take and when I came back into the control room, Chris was lying on the floor, which was his way of saying he liked it."

14 STREET LIFE

"Another high-energy song that's popular with fans. I tried to put an interesting lyric on top of the strong rhythmic track and it felt like a good combination. New member of the band Eddie Jobson features strongly on violin and keyboards."

15 DO THE STRAND

"This is one of the more light-hearted songs from our repertoire which seemed to catch the imagination of the Roxy audience. It became a kind of anthem. By the time that we'd got to the second album [*For Your Pleasure*], I was beginning to take lyrics more seriously and this pays homage to songwriters like Cole Porter. It refers to dance crazes from the past including the likes of the Tango, Waltz, Fandango, Samba, Beguine, The Madison and The Mashed Potato."

16 PYJAMARAMA

"This was the first time we recorded at Air Studios, which became our workplace for several years. *Pyjamarama* was our second standalone single. It's hard to know what influenced this – it was a bit of fun really. It features an outstanding alto sax solo by Andy Mackay. I'm afraid the out-of-tune guitar you might hear in the background is actually played by me."

17 VIRGINIA PLAIN

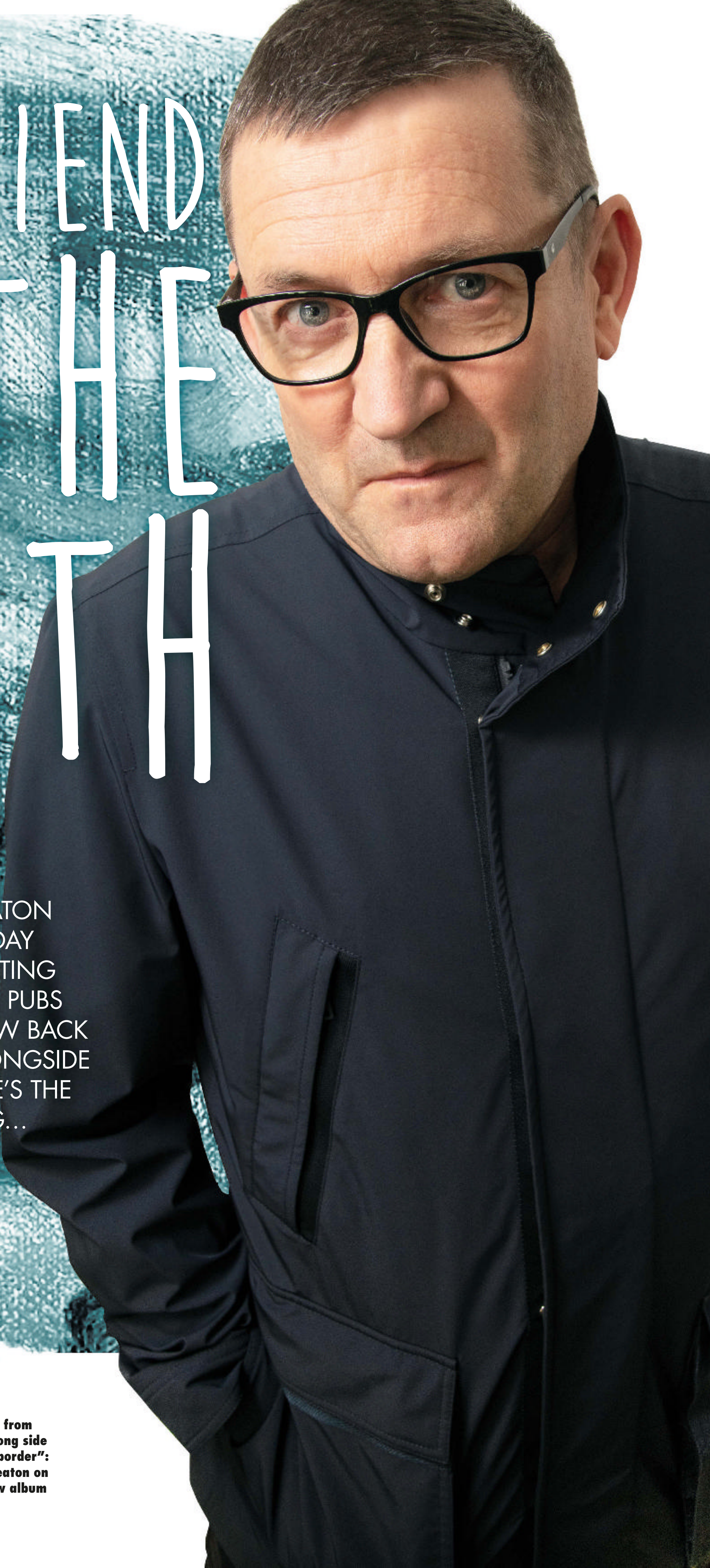
"The record company were as surprised as we were at the success of our first album. It was so different from anything else they had on Island Records. However, the album didn't have a single. I did have this song *Virginia Plain* which I thought might work, though, so we went back into Command Studios to record it. This was an old movie theatre, right next to Piccadilly Circus. We liked using sound effects, and I vividly remember our roadie whizzing up and down Piccadilly at great speed as we recorded his motorbike. This record was one of the best things we ever did and everybody in the band starred on this track. Great synth from Brian Eno, and Andy Mackay's unique oboe playing."

18 RE-MAKE/RE-MODEL

"We wanted to open with a bang, and liked the energy of this one. It was always good to do live. Wild playing from all the band, especially Brian Eno's great performance on the VCS3 synthesizer. The chorus of CPL 593H is the number plate of a cool car I saw at a festival." ■

● ***The Best Of Roxy Music*** **is released on 2 September via Virgin/UMC and reviewed on page 90. Roxy Music's 50th Anniversary UK Tour will run from 10-14 October.**

OUR FRIEND IN THE NORTH



EARLIER THIS YEAR, PAUL HEATON CELEBRATED HIS 60TH BIRTHDAY IN UNIQUE FASHION BY PUTTING £60,000 BEHIND THE BAR IN PUBS ACROSS THE COUNTRY. NOW BACK WITH HIS LATEST ALBUM ALONGSIDE JACQUI ABBOTT, *N.K-POP,* HE'S THE GIFT THAT KEEPS ON GIVING…

STEVE O'BRIEN

"K-Pop from the wrong side of the border": Paul Heaton on the new album

On 9 May 2022, Paul Heaton hit 60. As significant birthdays go, it's one where you can either stick your head in the sand or embrace it like you're greeting a long-lost twin.

For the one-time Housemartin and former Beautiful Souther, milestones like this are something to be bear hugged. For his half-century in 2012, Heaton set out on a bicycle tour, peddling 2,500 miles – that's 50 miles for each year he'd been on planet Earth – to perform at 33 different pubs.

This year, he'd planned to do the same, gigging at 60 pubs (drinking holes feature *a lot* in Paul Heaton's life) across the UK and Eire. However, the pandemic put paid to those plans, pushing back the recording of his and Jacqui Abbott's new studio album – of which more later.

Undeterred, Heaton turned to Twitter to announce he'd "decided that the next best way to celebrate this coming of age is to handpick 60 pubs across the UK and Ireland and put a given amount of money behind the bar of each one." £60,000 across 60 pubs, a grand apiece. It was a typically magnanimous move from one of pop's premier good guys.

"I meant it as a gesture of support," Paul tells *Classic Pop*, "and a little thanks to people. I wanted to celebrate my birthday by sharing a bit of what I've received from them over the years."

Heaton didn't actually go to any of those pubs on the day itself, instead enjoying a quiet lunch out with his wife. Come Saturday, however, Paul took a leaf out of the Queen's book and had himself a street party. "We took some chairs outside and boozed," he laughs. "I fell over and managed to get myself a new scar on my head."

This autumn there might well be another reason to get out the bunting and booze. Paul and Jacqui Abbott's fifth album as a duo, *N.K-Pop*, is released on 7 October and, if it has the same critical and commercial punch of its predecessor, 2020's *Manchester Calling*, then we're talking No.1 with a bullet.

Which is as it should be. As usual, *N.K-Pop* is another immaculate collection of instant pop gems, 12 could-be, should-be singles as dazzling as anything from best-selling Beautiful South comp *Carry On Up The Charts*. But, as Heaton says, we should have had this album much earlier.

As opposed to other songwriters for whom being stuck at home was a welcome chance to sit down with a blank Word document, for Paul it was exactly the opposite.

"I usually go away to write my lyrics," he tells us. With overseas travel being so unpredictable post-lockdown it was difficult to map his creative getaway. "I was sort of picking holes in the fence as to where and when I could go away," he says. He ended up penning parts of *N.K-Pop* in Holland and Germany and the majority of it in Estoril, Portugal.

"I found a tiny little football ground and wrote the lyrics and some of the tunes outside the bar there," he reveals. "I think the locals were really quite bemused about what I was doing."

"I USUALLY GO AWAY TO WRITE MY LYRICS. IT'S PART OF THE ADVENTURE. IT'S QUITE A PRIVATE THING EVEN THOUGH I DO IT IN PUBLIC."
PAUL HEATON

Heaton has written in foreign climes ever since he became famous. "It's part of the adventure, going away," he says. "You've got your folder out with all of your half-written lyrics and you're finishing your song in a place where nobody knows you. I can't stand the idea of people knowing me or watching me. It's quite a private thing, even though I do it in public."

Rotterdam or anywhere: Heaton has written in exotic climes such as Puerto Rico and Gran Canaria – this time it was Holland, Germany and Portugal

N.K-Pop addresses everything from the tabloids to the loss of a child

There's no mention of Portugal, or indeed Germany or Holland on *N.K-Pop*. Like the Paul and Jacqui albums before it, as well as Heaton's four solo records and his crateful of Housemartins and Beautiful South long-players, this one feels as British as a battered sausage. There's laugh-out-loud moments and sometimes rage in the 12 songs here, with some oblique references to our recently ousted Prime Minister ("a clown on the box for which I did not vote") and to some of the more splenetic tabloids and self-serving politicos ("Burn the *Express* and the *Mail*/ The key to real democracy/ Throw the Eton mob in jail").

"I do think those newspapers are on their way out," the self-declared socialist tells us, referring to the unblushingly political *Sunny Side Up*. "But they realise that and so they're going for a rowdier and more populist view to pull more people in. What they're doing, though, is pulling less people in, but making them angrier. I know several people who've been radicalised by the right-wing press, against immigrants, against anybody on the left, against woke. It's sad to see, because you can't argue with them. That's what the song's about – if you go out looking for trouble, you'll find it."

In the 2018 Channel Four documentary *Paul Heaton: From Hull To Heatongrad*, its then fiftysomething subject confesses to fears that he's run out of things to write about. How does he feel now? In a world of Brexit and Boris, the Capitol riots, Extinction Rebellion, #MeToo and Black Lives Matter, does he think there's enough cultural and political noise to galvanise his creativity?

"I probably write more about love and loss than I do about politics," Heaton says. "I think the political songs stick out more now because I haven't really changed my politics. People think, 'Oh, he must have softened up, he's writing these really nice soft songs about this and that,' and then suddenly there's this horrible one about the Government."

It's true that while there's always been a political edge to his writing, you'd be wildly off-base to define Heaton's work by it. There's generally more of Alan Bennett than Mick Lynch in his oeuvre,

Jacqui Abbott "did not set out to be a singer", but was asked to audition after Paul heard her sing at a party

TITLE TATTLE

Previous to this album, most of Paul and Jacqui Abbott's album titles – from 2014's *What Have We Become* to 2020's *Manchester Calling* – have been fairly self-explanatory. But where does *N.K-Pop* come from?

"I used to get these things that would come through as an email, or maybe even as a letter, requesting, 'Can *Song For Whoever* be used in *20 Great Pop Songs* in Belgium or the Benelux countries?' and you'd get one saying so and so region: Korea. And every time, I'd ask, well, which one is it? South or North Korea? Because I didn't like the fact that people just called South Korea, Korea. So I just thought because of K-Pop I thought it'd be nice to call it *N.K-Pop* as in North Korean Pop. It's a bit of a wind-up really."

"I'M REALLY INSPIRED BY EVERYDAY PEOPLE. THERE ARE SOME WEIRD, AMAZING STORIES OUT THERE."

PAUL HEATON

which are more often poignant or whimsical vignettes about specific moments in ordinary people's lives.

"I'm really inspired by everyday people," he says. "I know it sounds corny, but I'm just naturally inquisitive about people. I like stopping and talking, especially to older people, because they often won't know who I am. I find it interesting sharing stories. That's what's nice about going away, you can talk to anybody and ask them what they've been up to. There are some weird, amazing stories out there."

The public's first experience of *N.K-Pop* is the joyously catchy *Too Much For One (Not Enough For Two)*. But what's the process behind picking that lead track, when the entire album is filled with potential opening singles?

"Well, we gave the label the LP and said we think this, this and this could be a single," he explains. "I preferred *I Drove Her Away With My Tears* because it's quite immediate and it's always sounded good in my head. But also *When The World Would Actually Listen*. It's a kind of handicap race."

It must be similar to how you whittle down the album's tracklisting...

"We started off with about 21, 22 songs for this album," Heaton tells us, "but some of them didn't sound right or they've been ignored because somebody in the band doesn't like them, and then they drop away and you're left with your favourites."

Paul and Jacqui bring *N.K-Pop* to the UK's live arenas in November and December, with Irish dates to follow in 2023

Reunited in 2010, Jacqui and Paul have had four UK Top 5 albums, the most recent, *Manchester Calling*, taking the No.1 spot

What happens to those tracks that 'drop away'? Are they usually binned forever or do they sometimes find a life on a future album?

"They don't usually," he adds, "but I think there were a few from *Manchester Calling* on this one. I listened to them and thought, 'We can't just let that go, we ought to put that somewhere while it's relatively current,' so on the 16-track version of *N.K-Pop*, which I think may be the double vinyl, there's a few old ones. Sometimes we don't even record them but we start rehearsing them for the next album and realise, actually I can remember why I didn't particularly like them. It might be an awkward key change into the chorus. Sometimes I write the whole thing in my head and it sounds great, but when you get everybody playing it, it sort of deteriorates. But, you know, it can't work every time."

One of the spotlight tracks on *N.K-Pop* is *Still*. A blisteringly pained exploration of how the death of a child affects those left behind ("Still feel your heartbeat/ The tiniest drum/ Still feel your fingers/ Tight round my thumb"), it's one of Heaton's most devastating songs. Was that one based on a story that was told to him?

"I'm 60 so a fair few people close to me have lost kids in different circumstances," he explains. "I wanted to address the male side of it, and how angry you can get and how people can fall out. I didn't want to make it particularly about any stage in the birth or after – or even an infant, I just wanted to write about loss."

Another loss that Heaton addresses on the album is that of his mum, who died during its writing. But *My Mother's Womb* is no strings-drenched weepfest, instead it's a raucous stomper that's paradoxically one of the most buoyant tracks on the record.

"I know it sounds funny to say but I didn't have any problems with her passing," he says, matter-of-factly. "She'd reached the age of 90 and she was still happily belligerent and argumentative and causing the nurses no end of bother in the hospital, which was fairly amusing. So I wrote it as a memoriam, to make sure I remembered what she was about in a positive way. It wasn't so much therapeutic but more: bang, this is what she was about. We're not a family of grievers, we've always taken people's passing positively. I think about my mum and dad a few times a day and it cracks a smile on my face."

For many people hitting the big six-o, like Heaton did in May this year, thoughts of mortality are omnipresent. But Paul clearly isn't the sort to give into that kind of age-related gloom. The colours in his music are as vibrant and multi-hued as they were three decades ago and, despite confessing that sometimes he "bends down for something, but then can't get up", he seems genuinely unfazed by his newly sexagenarian status.

"That 60th birthday thing was a chance to celebrate and tell people I'm 60 'cause I'm sort of proud!" he laughs. "Forty was a bit more murky because I was drinking a lot. Fifty was brilliant because I did the cycle tour all the way around Britain and Ireland."

So, what's the plan for 2032? Paul will be blowing out 70 candles then, but you feel that even that day will be celebrated with the giddy enthusiasm of someone turning 21. "Oh, I can't tell you yet," he teases, "but I've got a really good idea!"

● ***N.K-Pop* is released on 7 October via Virgin EMI and reviewed on page 80**

POPARAZZI

READERS SHARE THEIR FAVOURITE PHOTOS AS THEY GET UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL WITH SOME OF THE BIGGEST NAMES IN PLANET POP

Send your Poparazzi pics now to **steve.harnell@anthem.co.uk**

NENEH CHERRY WITH PAUL BURNS

This was taken at a recent signing event at Rough Trade East in London on 17 June for Neneh's new album, *The Versions*. Neneh took time chatting to everyone in the queue in her British-American accent – and I was very excited getting a signed copy of *Raw Like Sushi*.

NICK RHODES WITH MATTHEW NORTH

Here I am in 2014 when I met Duran Duran's Nick Rhodes at The Cure's aftershow party at Hammersmith Apollo. As we chatted, I commented it was about time Duran played a show in the South West as the last one was in 1998. I suggested a summer gig at the Eden Project in Cornwall. Nick's words to me that night were, "If this happens then it will be because of you". Roll on two years and the show goes ahead. I went to the gig and spotted Nick doing a radio interview in the press area. I spoke to Duran's manager and told her the story – "Oh, you must say hello after the interview," she said. Following the interview, I did indeed get to say hello. My opening line was: "I hope you don't find this odd, but do you remember chatting to me about the idea of playing here at The Cure gig?". "Of course I do," replied Nick. We had a brief chat and he was good enough to let me have another photograph. A thoroughly decent chap is Nick Rhodes…

HOWARD JONES WITH LYNDA STAUFFER

This shot of me with Howard was taken during his Transform Tour at Orlando's Hard Rock Live in July 2019. I've met him a number of times in the past and he always has something special to say. On this occasion, he asked me how many shows I'd been to on this tour – it was three. He also asked where I lived, to which I replied, "Oh, just two hours north…" I'm a dedicated fan!

TOM BAILEY WITH RON PETERS

I met Tom on 1 August 2018 at Iridium in New York City, a very intimate dinner venue seating only about 80 people. I'd not seen Tom in person since 1985! He played his longer, full set of songs spanning from his early 1983 hits to tracks from his then-current album *Science Fiction*. After the gig he came out to meet fans and following some talk with him and an autograph on one of my rarest Thompson Twins records, we took this photo together. I've been a fan since '83 and have one of the largest collections of Tom's music and memorabilia. As a musician myself, he has been one of my biggest creative influences of all time. It's always been all about the music for me, first and foremost. Tom's artistry and classical training shine through in every song he makes.

N.K-POP
PAUL HEATON +
JACQUI ABBOTT
THE NEW ALBUM
OCTOBER 7TH 2022
INCLUDES
'TOO MUCH FOR ONE (NOT ENOUGH FOR TWO)' + 'STILL'
EMI

It Bites – Once Around The World

THE 80s POP-PROG REVIVAL WASN'T ALL GENESIS AND MARILLION – IT BITES ALSO HIT BIG WITH *CALLING ALL THE HEROES* AND THEIR SUPREMELY CONFIDENT SECOND STUDIO ALBUM, *ONCE AROUND THE WORLD*, HAS SINCE BECOME A LOST CLASSIC.

MATT PHILLIPS

★ ★

The received critical wisdom about It Bites was that they were too pop to be heavy metal, too heavy to be pop, more interested in musical excellence than hit singles and driven by a reverence for quality progressive rock and jazz-fusion. But in their relatively short recording history (at least with the original line-up of Francis Dunnery on guitar/vocals, keyboardist John Beck, bassist Dick Nolan and Bob Dalton on drums) between 1986 and 1989, they nonetheless managed one huge hit, *Calling All The Heroes*, several other near-hits and three well-received studio albums.

Emerging from Cumbria in the early 80s, after an initiation period as a covers band playing songs by the likes of Haircut One Hundred and Level 42, they knuckled down to writing their own material and were signed by Virgin Records in 1985, releasing their debut collection, *The Big Lad In The Windmill*, on the label the following autumn. It reached No.35 in the UK and spawned that famous one-hit wonder.

Expectations were high for the follow-up album. Virgin MD Richard Branson was taking an interest and offering up his Manor studio. This was the era of the superstar producer, though, and one such helmer loomed large as It Bites tried out a few potential collaborators. "Nick Froome was part of Trevor Horn's camp. Everyone who had ever walked past Horn was given a record to produce. I think Trevor's milkman produced Then Jerico and had a hit!" Dunnery joked to *Prog* magazine in 2015, referencing Gary Langan. As for Froome, he may not have emerged from the *Once Around The World* experience with a producer credit but did end up engineering most of the album.

"IT WAS LIKE HEAVEN. ALL THE DRINK YOU WANTED, ALL THE FOOD YOU WANTED, ALL THE POT YOU WANTED. AND AN AMAZING STUDIO OUTSIDE THE FRONT DOOR." **FRANCIS DUNNERY**

Arriving at the bucolic Manor in Oxfordshire, the band embarked on self-producing the challenging compositions on Side Two, but not before some initial demob hijinks: "We chose our rooms and then drank the wine cellars dry," Dunnery recalled to *Prog*. "It was like heaven. All the drink you wanted, all the food you wanted, all the pot you wanted. And an amazing studio just outside the front door where we could record songs that were over 10 minutes long. I was hungover for six weeks."

The extraordinary 14-minute title track was put together with the assistance of U2/ The Smiths/Talking Heads collaborator Mark Wallis and filmed for Channel Four's *Equinox* programme, which is available to watch on YouTube.

But this epic was no tuneless, indulgent musical mess – each section earned its keep with memorable, catchy moments and brilliant ensemble playing. Elsewhere, the barmy *Hunting The Whale* made good use of the Manor swimming pool and John Beck's accordion, *Plastic Dreamer* was pomp-pop at its best (and, lyrically, a sort of prototype *Toy Story*) while *Old Man And The Angel* added an audacious middle section and new coda to the single version that had failed to chart in the autumn of 1987.

But the record company, while generally supportive, stepped in after they heard the first fruits of the band's labours. Early recording sessions at The Manor were

It drinks and smokes: The band cut 20-minute prog epics fuelled by a diet of weed – and Richard Branson's wine cellar…

deemed chaotic by Virgin who were desperate for a hit single to promote the album. With that in mind, they turned to producer Steve Hillage to sculpt a chart-friendly 7". Hillage, once a member of acclaimed prog rockers Gong and a Virgin solo artist to boot, emerged as a stabilising influence and fine arranger of their material, producing Side One's five shorter tracks: *Kiss Like Judas* was almost *Calling All The Heroes* part 2, with a lyric that updated Victor Hugo's *Hunchback Of Notre-Dame*; *Midnight*, with its brutal funk-rock riff and lyrical reference to Japan's *Art Of Parties*.

Kiss Like Judas, *Rose Marie*, *Yellow Christian* and *Black December* all featured soaring melodies, rock-solid grooves and distinctive lyrics. The former two were later released as singles but missed the UK Top 40. Commercial concerns seemed of little interest to the band, though. It Bites were more than content playing 20-minute jams and smoking marijuana.

Finally, *Once Around The World* was in the can, and the album was a triumph. Dunnery's vocal melodies were memorable and original, reflecting influences as disparate as Paddy McAloon, David Sylvian and Peter Gabriel. Beck's use of major-seventh chords smacked of a misspent youth playing easy listening and light jazz standards in Cumbrian working men's clubs, and there was a touch of 80s R&B in the mix too with the band's use of recurring motifs.

> "WE WERE JUST TOO GOOD FOR THEM TO UNDERSTAND – THE SO-CALLED MUSIC PRESS WERE SO INCREDIBLY UNMUSICAL THAT WE WENT OVER THEIR HEADS" **FRANCIS DUNNERY**

But essentially it was very 'English' music, with barely a blues lick or concession to US rock: "I once slagged *Once Around The World* off as being pretentious, but I think it was honest of It Bites to write that music," Dunnery told *Guitarist* magazine in 1989. "We weren't pretending to be anything. We don't write songs about being rebels from the streets or pretending we come from L.A. – it's OK for Bon Jovi or Guns 'N Roses, because they were brought up with it, but when these English bands try to be American…"

Once Around The World was unleashed at the end of March 1988 but stalled at No.43 in the UK, a big surprise and disappointment to all concerned. It was derided by *Melody Maker* and *NME*, ignored by *Q*, tolerated by *Sounds* but loved by heavy metal magazine *Kerrang!* ("flowing, delicate melodies, sophisticated arrangements and superb musical performances"). "We were too good for them to understand," an unrepentant Dunnery volunteered years later to *Prog*. "The so-called music press were so incredibly unmusical that we went over their heads."

However, It Bites remained a major live draw. They headlined a sold-out UK tour (during which Dunnery occasionally attacked the press from the stage, especially at a memorable London Astoria gig) throughout April and May 1988, supported Robert Plant and played some major summer European festivals. And as hard rock made a return onto the British pop radar at the end of the 80s with the emergence of The Quireboys, Thunder, Gun and Little Angels et al, their heavier 1989 album *Eat Me In St Louis* was a strong seller.

But it was also the swansong for It Bites' original line-up – Dunnery quit the band in the summer of 1990 for a solo career. *Once Around The World* would stand as their crowning glory, a career peak for one of the most gifted British bands of the 80s.

CLASSIC POP TOP TEN

WEEK ENDING **06 SEPTEMBER 1987**

A SAW CLASSIC, CALI SURF MEETS NYC HIT HOP, BONO AND CO GET POLITICAL, SINITTA'S ODE TO HER PLAYTHING AND SYNTH-POP'S HEROES MEET THEIRS…

STEVE O'BRIEN

01 (1) **NEVER GONNA GIVE YOU UP**
RICK ASTLEY
(RCA)

02 (3) **WIPEOUT**
THE FAT BOYS AND THE BEACH BOYS
(URBAN)

NEVER GONNA GIVE YOU UP
RICK ASTLEY (RCA)

It's hard to imagine now a time before *Never Gonna Give You Up*. Rick Astley's SAW-crafted debut has become one of the most ubiquitous tunes of the past 35 years, so much so that the 'Rickrolling' internet meme (which lures users who are looking for something completely different and then springs this song on them) has its own Wikipedia page. Though this is seen as the ultimate Stock Aitken Waterman track, it's proved so adaptable that it works as a hard-rock banger (check out Astley performing the song with Foo Fighters in 2017) and as a piano ballad, as on Rick's *The Best Of Me* compilation from 2019. Back in 1987, though, it was a worldwide smash, spending five weeks at the top of the UK charts.

WHERE THE STREETS HAVE NO NAME
U2 (ISLAND)

Written about Northern Ireland's sectarianism, *Where The Streets Have No Name* was the opening track from U2's iconic 1987 album *The Joshua Tree* and released as that record's third single. Like all the best pop-rock tunes, it sounds like it arrived fully-formed, though co-producer Daniel Lanois revealed to *Hot Press* that it "was the science-project song. I remember having this massive schoolhouse blackboard, as we call them. I was holding a pointer, like a college professor, walking the band through the chord changes like a fucking nerd. It was ridiculous." Talking in 2006 to Neil McCormick for the *U2 By U2* book, drummer Larry Mullen Jr. said: "It took so long to get that song right, it was difficult for us to make any sense of it. It only became a truly great song through playing live. On the record, musically, it's not half the song it is live."

WIPEOUT
THE FAT BOYS AND THE BEACH BOYS (URBAN)

They may not be as lauded as some of their 80s hip-hop stablemates, but Brooklyn's Fat Boys can at least claim greater chart success than either E.P.M.D., N.W.A. or De La Soul. It must be said, though, that both the duo's Top 2 UK hits were hook-ups with other artists, locking arms with 60s surf legends The Beach Boys in this case and, a year later, with Chubby Checker for a rappy cover of the singer's 1960 hit *The Twist*. This collab with The Beach Boys was also a new take on a 60s classic, though oddly enough not one by The Beach Boys themselves. *Wipeout* was, in fact, a surf instrumental by the Wilson clan's rivals The Surfaris. Still, they were game, adding their honeyed harmonies to this hip-hop-flavoured reboot.

WHAT HAVE I DONE TO DESERVE THIS?
PET SHOP BOYS AND DUSTY SPRINGFIELD (PARLOPHONE)

Dusty Springfield enjoyed a surprise renaissance at the end of the 80s thanks to a number of team-ups with the Pet Shop Boys. *What Have I Done To Deserve This?* was their first collaboration and only joint single. A No.2 hit over here, it was also Neil Tennant and Chris Lowe's first time working with a co-writer, in this case, Allee Willis, who'd also co-penned the Earth Wind & Fire favourites *September* and *Boogie Wonderland*. The song had been written for PSB's 1986 debut album *Please*, only the pair couldn't work out who would sing the female part. Once they zeroed in on Dusty, she turned it down, only to change her mind after hearing *West End Girls*.

03 (2) **WHAT HAVE I DONE TO DESERVE THIS?**
PET SHOP BOYS AND DUSTY SPRINGFIELD
(PARLOPHONE)

04 (-) **WHERE THE STREETS HAVE NO NAME**
U2
(ISLAND)

05 (9) **HEART AND SOUL**
T'PAU
(SIREN)

06 (4) **TOY BOY**
SINITTA
(FANFARE)

07 (15) **SOME PEOPLE**
CLIFF RICHARD
(EMI)

08 (5) **SWEET LITTLE MYSTERY**
WET WET WET
(PRECIOUS ORGANISATION)

09 (8) **WONDERFUL LIFE**
BLACK
(A&M)

10 (20) **CASANOVA**
LEVERT
(ATLANTIC)

HEART AND SOUL
T'PAU (SIREN)

Heart And Soul was T'Pau's first single, but cratered on first release. However, after it soundtracked an advert for Pepe Jeans, it was reissued, and won the band a Top 5 UK hit. The song was conceived after Ronnie Rogers (T'Pau rhythm guitarist and Carol Decker's then-partner) had bought himself a new keyboard with a built-in sequencer. "While messing around with the sequencer he started the 'bum bum buh buh bum bum bum' of the bass riff," Decker told Kickin' It Old School. "I started to sing a melody over it, the wafty vocal, and came up with: 'more than an ocean keeps us apart.' The lyrics were about when I went on holiday with my parents and Ronnie couldn't come. I missed him so much, but then I morphed the story into a fictitious one of not being loved back (which I was)."

SOME PEOPLE
CLIFF RICHARD
(EMI)

Despite nearing 50, you couldn't accuse the Cliff Richard of 1987 of playing it safe. This none-more-80s number off his *Always Guaranteed* LP wasn't exactly a doff of the cap to his now-greying 50s fanbase, instead having more in common with his more recent smashes like *Wired For Sound* and *A Little In Love*. However, that's not a surprise as it was penned by Alan Tarney, who'd co-written those two songs, as well as 1979's *We Don't Talk Anymore*. Tarney's also notable for producing most of A-ha's earliest hits, including *Take On Me* and *The Sun Always Shines On TV* and even working on their 2015 LP *Cast In Steel*. *Some People* peaked at No.3 in the UK and was certified silver by the BPI.

WONDERFUL LIFE
BLACK (A&M)

Black was, contrary to popular opinion, not a band, but a solo artist, scooping his only Top 10 hit with this lilting indie evergreen favourite. Tragically, Black (real name: Colin Vearncombe) died in a car accident in Ireland in 2016 at the age of 53.

CASANOVA
LEVERT (ATLANTIC)

Formed by Sean and Gerald Levert (sons of O'Jays frontman Eddie Levert), LeVert (note the capital V) scored their only UK hit with this slice of uber-varnished soul. Both brothers are no longer with us, Gerald died from an overdose in 2006 then Sean passed away two years later whilst serving a prison sentence for non-payment of child support.

TOY BOY
SINITTA (FANFARE)

Given that her mother is 70s disco diva Miquel Brown and her aunt is *Knock On Wood* singer Amii Stewart, it seemed inevitable that the girl born Sinitta Malone would become a star. Sinitta's first hit was in 1985 with *So Macho* (No.2 UK), though follow-up *Feels Like The First Time* didn't even make the Top 40. She was luckier with her third 7", a fizzy, SAW-produced slice of disco fluff titled *Toy Boy* (sample lyric: "Toy boy, toy boy, everybody's talkin'/ When they see me walkin'/ With this little boy of mine/ He's my plaything and I love him/ I dress him up lookin' fine"), which was penned after a British red-top printed a story about the singer's love life. It would provide a No.4 hit for the future Simon Cowell squeeze.

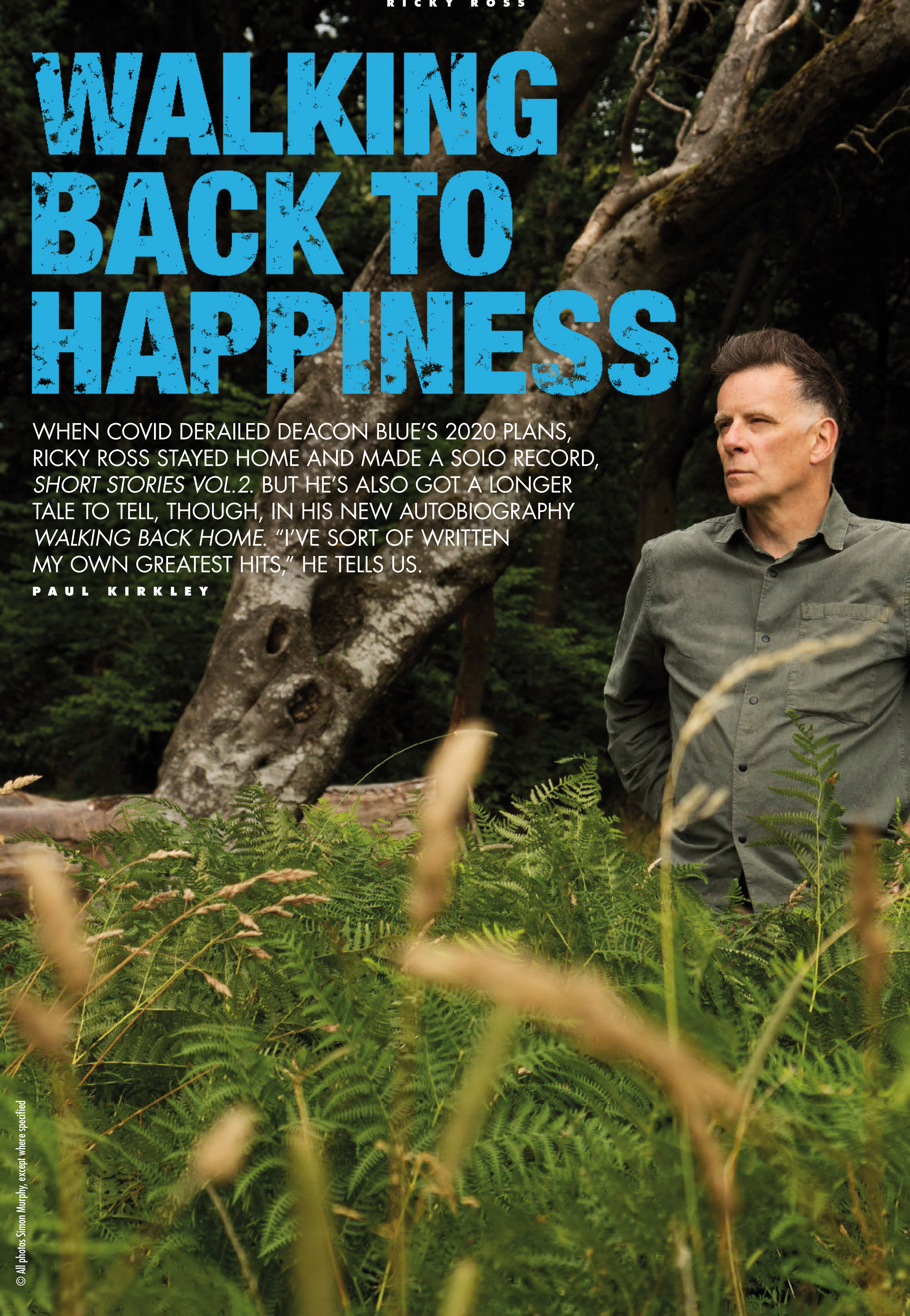
SWEET LITTLE MYSTERY
WET WET WET
(PRECIOUS ORGANISATION)

Though they enjoyed one of their biggest hits with *Sweet Little Mystery* (it would peak at No.5 in the UK), this second platter from the Glaswegian four-piece would prove quite a headache for the Wets. None other than Van Morrison sued them, claiming the group had pilfered some of the lyrics from his song *A Sense Of Wonder*, which was released just two years before. They were also blasted for using lyrics from John Martyn's identically-titled *Sweet Little Mystery* from 1980. Both Morrison and Martyn were later credited as co-writers. Marti Pellow covered the song solo for his 2002 album *Marti Pellow Sings The Hits Of Wet Wet Wet & Smile*.

WALKING BACK TO HAPPINESS

WHEN COVID DERAILED DEACON BLUE'S 2020 PLANS, RICKY ROSS STAYED HOME AND MADE A SOLO RECORD, *SHORT STORIES VOL.2*. BUT HE'S ALSO GOT A LONGER TALE TO TELL, THOUGH, IN HIS NEW AUTOBIOGRAPHY *WALKING BACK HOME*. "I'VE SORT OF WRITTEN MY OWN GREATEST HITS," HE TELLS US.

PAUL KIRKLEY



© All photos Simon Murphy, except where specified

When *Classic Pop* last spoke to Ricky Ross, in early 2020, it was shaping up to be Deacon Blue's biggest year in two decades. There was a much-anticipated new album, *City Of Love*, championed by Radio Two and supported by the most extensive UK tour the band had ever undertaken. After which they planned to head off to Europe, then Australia, with a handful of summer festival dates along the way.

But fate, as we know, had other ideas – which is why, when *CP* catches up with Ross more than two years on, Deacon Blue are still in the middle of that much-delayed '2020' tour. "Yeah, we're still not finished," he says. "It's been very fraught – every day, you knew it could all just stop at any moment. But things do seem to be getting better, and we're grateful to be back."

He hasn't exactly been idle in the meantime, though: as the world ground to a halt during the first lockdown, Ricky got busy writing and recording a new solo album (a follow-up to 2017's *Short Stories Vol.1*, called… well, you can probably work it out) and penning his autobiography, due out this month.

"I started making the record in this room, where I am now," Ricky, now an impossibly youthful-looking 64, tells us over Zoom from the Glasgow south side home he shares with his wife and Deacon Blue fellow traveller Lorraine McIntosh. "Lorraine was upstairs, self-isolating with Covid – I'd recently got over my bout – and it just started to take shape in this little studio here. It wasn't really intentional, I just got this creative spur, and ended up writing and recording it at the same time, which is quite unusual for me."

The *Short Stories* concept had emerged organically out of Ricky's stripped-back solo tours. "Doing those shows, I realised what worked best for the audience was knowing I was going to do a cross-section of my solo things, but also lots of Deacon Blue songs. Because that's been my life, really – it's more central to me than anything else. That's where I wrote all the songs that people know me for," says the man behind such perfectly crafted pop gems as *Dignity*, *Chocolate Girl* and *Real Gone Kid*. "So I thought it might be nice to make an album where I revisited a few songs that would work in that live situation – quite raw and acoustic – along with some new material."

The result, he says, was a collection of his most "inside" creations: "They felt like songs that belonged in a room, not out in the world. They were slightly more claustrophobic. And I called the album *Short Stories Vol.1* as a marker for myself, really. I always had in mind to do another one, and this just felt like the right time – when there was nothing much else we could do."

If *Vol.1* was full of interior songs, then *Vol.2* – perhaps understandably in the circumstances – is full of yearning for the open spaces of the great outdoors. "I was probably just looking for a way out, you know?" reflects Ricky, whose home recordings were then embellished with strings and brass, along with contributions from Lorraine and their Deacon Blue cohort Gregor Philp. "There was a point, if you remember, when you weren't supposed to leave your own council area. I remember going for a drive with Lorraine, just on the outskirts of Glasgow, and there were police turning people back. So there are quite a few songs inspired by wanting to get back out walking in the hills."

It's a longing expressed most explicitly on *Still Walking*, in which a hike through the Highlands ("Aberfeldy, with the hills in the distance, the mist on the loch…") evokes a spiritual response to God's green Earth (Ricky and Lorraine are practising Roman Catholics), against a delicate backdrop of piano and swooping cello. Meanwhile, *The Unpath*, finds him roaming off the beaten track, tramping the high ground and feeling the grass and the heather beneath his walking boots.

But it's on the gorgeous *Spanish Shoes* that Ricky's desire for escape takes fullest flight, his imagination soaring over the rooftiles and chimney stacks of Glasgow in a song he describes as "a promise I made to myself" about celebrating the end of the pandemic, whenever that should be.

"Because we couldn't really see anyone, Lorraine and I ended up doing a lot of cross-city adventures – just walking through all these really empty streets," he recalls of the track's lyrical inspiration. Musically, the song is built around a series of "the simplest minor chords I could find. It's something I normally shy away from, just playing minor chords," he admits. But then, in those dark days, life was one long minor chord…

Even pre-Covid, walking is a theme that runs through Ricky's work like a watermark: his autobiography is named (like Deacon Blue's 1999 comeback record) *Walking Back*

"THIS LATEST COLLECTION OF SONGS FELT LIKE THEY BELONGED IN A ROOM, NOT OUT IN THE WORLD. THEY WERE SLIGHTLY MORE CLAUSTROPHOBIC."

© Alamy

Deacon Blue back in their late-80s heyday

Home; the group's 1991 album *Fellow Hoodlums* closes out with the Cajun jig of *One Day I'll Go Walking*, and Ross' 2013 solo song *Nothing More Than Travelling Now* finds him hiking through valleys and mountains, bound he knows not where.

"Lorraine said to me, when she heard this album, 'no more walking!'" laughs Ricky. "But I think I've always just had this realisation that… you're always moving. Physically, emotionally and spiritually, you're moving. There's a little place on Mull where I used to take kids when I was a youth worker, and we used to do a wee sing-song. That's where I learned the hymn *One More Step Along The World I Go*, and it's always stuck with me; that has always been my favourite hymn. It's just my perennial thing: it doesn't matter what phase of life you're at, you're travelling through it. You're trying to get somewhere, and possibly you'll never arrive."

And we're not always travelling in one direction, of course – hence *Walking Back Home*. "Yeah, that struck me as a good title for the book, because I think a lot of the searching we do, as people, is trying to find a way home," he reflects. "To find a way back."

The book traces Ricky's story from his early days in Dundee, where he had a brief pre-pop star career as an English teacher, through the highs and lows of life in Deacon Blue, via meditations on music, faith, politics and more. "I've picked out moments that I think were significant turning points," he explains. "So in that sense, I've sort of written my own greatest hits. There's lots of stuff about the band, but also lots that's very personal – material that would really be of no consequence to anyone else, but meant a lot to me.

"There are two big things that I've left out," he adds. "I don't talk much about my children [he has four, three of them with Lorraine], and I don't really talk about my first marriage. Because that's someone else's story, and I didn't think it was fair."

Did writing the book stir up much emotional silt, or did it leave him feeling he'd led something of a charmed life? "I feel very grateful," he says. "But I do reflect in the book on some of the more difficult moments, and some things I might have done differently. I went through a time in the late 90s, early 2000s where I was kind of directionless.

"There is an acknowledgment in the book of one of the worst 24 hours of my life, where because I'd done that thing you should never do, and signed my recording and publishing deals with the same company, it all went pear-shaped on the same day."

"YOU GO THROUGH TIMES WHEN PEOPLE JUST WON'T TOUCH YOU WITH A BARGE POLE, AND THEN YOU'RE SOME KIND OF UNLIKELY NATIONAL TREASURE"

Deacon Blue arrived to great acclaim with their 1987 debut album *Raintown* – a 35th anniversary edition was released in early June – on which Ricky chronicled rust-belt stories of love, hope and heartbreak in post-industrial Glasgow like a Strathclyde Springsteen. Prophetically titled follow-up *When The World Knows Your Name* pushed them into the major league (famously knocking Madonna's *Like A Prayer* off the No.1 spot), but as 90s Britain surrendered first to baggy, then grunge and Britpop, Deacon Blue's brand of literate, heart-on-the-sleeve Celtic soul music already felt like a relic from a bygone age. When the band split in 1994, no one really even seemed to notice.

If we've learned anything about the life-cycle of pop groups, though, it's that the years of boom and bust can often give way to a critical and commercial rehabilitation. Which is why, like their Glasgow contemporaries Simple Minds and Del Amitri, Deacon Blue are currently enjoying a well-deserved second act: despite 2020's setbacks, *City Of Love* was their most successful record in a quarter of a century and, after years on the civic hall circuit, they're back playing arenas. They are, to put it bluntly, loved.

"It's funny," smiles Ricky, who has a long-standing side hustle as a Sony Award-winning broadcaster (and now podcaster). "You go through times when people just won't touch you with a

Top right: Ricky mixes arena-sized dates with Deacon Blue and intimate venues for his solo shows

barge pole, and then suddenly you find you're some kind of unlikely national treasure. But I think there's been a change in the way music is viewed. That thing that we grew up with, in the 70s and 80s, when you were either in or out, cool or not cool, you loved this band, so you hated that band…. My kids aren't like that at all, and I don't think their generation thinks that way. They're very eclectic in their tastes."

Recently, the *Daily Record* reported on a poll of the all-time top 100 Scottish music artists, in which Deacon Blue finished a highly respectable fourth position (behind Primal Scream, Simple Minds and Travis). That's not too shabby, is it? "It depends who they asked, I suppose," demurs Ross. "On another day, we'd be 94th."

The list was inevitably dominated by Glasgow. What is it about that rain-slicked city of dreamers that has inspired such a musical legacy – and what's Ricky's advice to Edinburgh on how it can raise its game?

"You know, Edinburgh's a great city, but I think Glasgow… it's a rock and roll city. It's a city that people come to," he says. "It's like Nashville: you go to Nashville, and you discover that a lot of folk aren't from there. They go there because it's a gathering place, and Glasgow is very similar. Bands think, 'it happened here for them, it could happen for us'. So it's kind of self-generating in some ways."

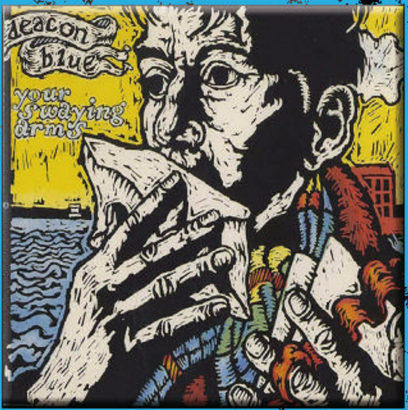
In the autumn, Ricky will be leaving the city behind and taking *Short Stories Vol.2* on the road for a series of intimate shows, where he'll share a mix of songs and stories from the piano stool. After which, he'll get busy writing the next chapter of his story. Because, now that he's been let back out into the world, Ricky Ross clearly has no intention of hanging up those walking boots yet.

● ***Short Stories Vol.2*** **is released via Cooking Vinyl and reviewed on page 85.** ***Walking Back Home*** **is published by Headline.**

KIND OF BLUE

Ricky has reworked three tracks from the Deacon Blue songbook for *Short Stories Vol. 2: Bethlehem's Gate* (from 1993's *Whatever You Say, Say Nothing*), *I Am Born* (from 2001's *Homesick*) and the swooning classic *Your Swaying Arms* (from 1991's *Fellow Hoodlums*). "I hadn't played *Your Swaying Arms* in my solo shows before, because it was very much a band song, a band arrangement – it's the ultimate Deacon Blue track in that way," he explains. "It's the one that really showcases us – at that time, at our very best. But then I just sat down and played it at the piano and really liked it."

He's described it as "the story of a man lost in grief"… "It really came about because Lorraine's father had died not long before that. Also, her mum had died quite young. So I was thinking about their relationship: 'Send me back all the things she ever



wrote/ Tell me secrets of her days when she was young' – that's someone trying to find a connection with all the bits they've lost of a person. We were on tour in Europe, just after Lorraine's dad had died, and the song sort of emerged from there."

Glamour Professionals: Walter Becker and Donald Fagen of Steely Dan pose for a portrait in April 1978

YACHT ROCK

YOUR AT-A-GLANCE GUIDE TO SOME OF OUR FAVOURITE SUB-GENRES

THIS ISSUE, WE SET SAIL FOR SOME HIGH-CLASS MUSICAL ESCAPISM

STEVE O'BRIEN

WHAT IS IT?

Unusually, the term 'yacht rock' was only coined well after the genre's 70s and early-80s heyday. At the time when this FM-friendly stew of super-varnished production, breezy vocals and sumptuous, swooping melodies was peaking in the charts, it was mostly talked about as AOR (Adult Oriented Rock) or soft rock, but there was always something so much more distinct about the genre that it needed its own moniker. It was, as presenter Katie Puckrik memorably described in her 2019 BBC documentary, *The Smooth World Of Yacht Rock*, "millionaires' make-out music", where polished pop met polished rock, a soothing sonic balm for a United States on fire. The term itself was only minted in 2005 by aficionados JD Ryznar, David Lyons and Hunter D Stair for their web series of the same name. Why yacht rock, though? Ryznar suggested to *Rolling Stone* that, "it feels like you're on a yacht listening to it". However, yachts represent not just glamour and affluence but also freedom and escape, qualities yacht rock had in spades.

This was music that was largely untouched by fashion, with a furrow-browed sincerity that is all too easy to mock. Birthed at the same time as punk, it almost pitted itself as the antithesis of that scruffy, three-chord, lo-fi scream; everything about yacht rock was perfectly crafted, exquisitely buffed and, above all, inoffensive. Even if the lyrics were edging towards introspection (and if there is melancholy in a yacht-rock song, it's only lightly sketched), the melody must always be upbeat and reassuring. If punk was about embracing reality, yacht rock was about fleeing it for somewhere sunnier.

Could yacht rock make a comeback? Fleetwood Mac and Queen were, just 10 years ago, thought of as corporate sell-outs, but are now embraced by hipsters, whose musical education hasn't been shaped by the crippling snobbery of the *NME* or *Rolling Stone*. And if yacht rock was born from the social battles of the 70s, then surely today's bruising culture wars necessitate more music to escape into. In 2019, NOW Music released an 18-track compilation of yacht rock classics, suggesting that, nearly 40 years after it sank in popularity, we're finally embracing that most uncool of music styles.

ESSENTIAL SONGS

CHRISTOPHER CROSS
RIDE LIKE THE WIND

KENNY LOGGINS
THIS IS IT

TOTO AFRICA

SEALS & CROFTS
SUMMER BREEZE

BOZ SCAGGS
LIDO SHUFFLE

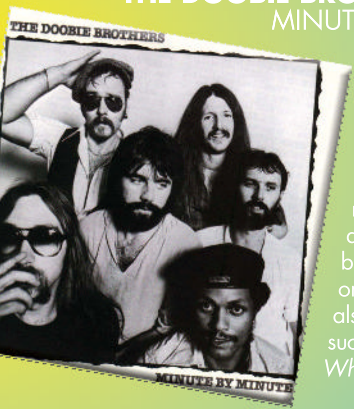
HALL & OATES
RICH GIRL

© Getty

ESSENTIAL ALBUMS

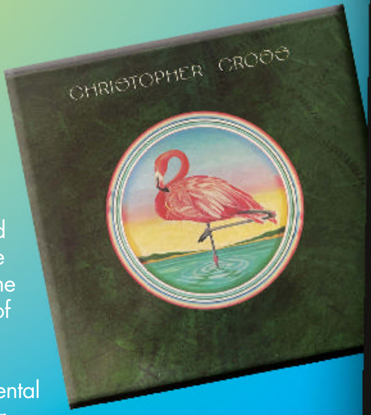
STEELY DAN AJA (1977)
Named after a steam-powered dildo referenced in the William S Burroughs novel *Naked Lunch* (yes, really), Steely Dan were always somewhat artier than their yacht rock stablemates. Fusing jazz and pop as well as slithers of R&B, soul, disco and classical, *Aja* is the duo's magnum opus. Although put together by Donald Fagen and Walter Becker, it's the army of accomplished session pros, including saxophonist Wayne Shorter and keyboardist-vibraphonist Victor Feldman, that really make this a masterclass in musical craft.

THE DOOBIE BROTHERS
MINUTE BY MINUTE (1978)



Although *Minute By Minute* was The Doobie Brothers' eighth LP, it was with this one that they toned down the guitars, and Michael McDonald's piano now drove the songs. The album became the band's biggest to date, hitting No.1 on the Billboard chart while also birthing their most successful 7", the YR classic, *What A Fool Believes.*

CHRISTOPHER CROSS
CHRISTOPHER CROSS (1979)

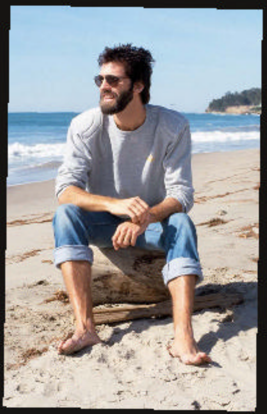


The debut album from yacht-rock god Christopher Cross and one of the very first digitally recorded LPs, *Christopher Cross* was showered with awards on its release, as he became the first artist to scoop the four major Grammy categories of Record of the Year, Album of the Year, Song of the Year, and Best New Artist. Unblushingly sentimental and as warm as a hug from your favourite granny, this is in many ways the archetypal yacht-rock LP, if only for the classic *Sailing*.

ESSENTIAL ARTISTS

Christopher Cross

Little talked about now, Christopher Cross scored one of the biggest yacht rock hits with the theme from the 1981 Dudley Moore comedy *Arthur*. A skilled guitarist, Cross worked alongside Steely Dan before releasing his self-titled debut in 1979. The first artist in Grammy history to win all four general field awards in a single ceremony (a feat not matched until Billie Eilish in 2020), Cross' career crashed in the mid-80s, with his *Every Turn Of The World* (1985) and *Back Of My Mind* (1988) albums failing to break even the Top 100. He's still at it, though, releasing his last record in 2017.



Kenny Loggins

Despite being best known for the decidedly non-yacht-ish *Footloose*, Kenny Loggins is, in fact, one of the Mount Rushmore faces of the genre. He started out in the early 70s as one half of soft-rock pairing Loggins And Messina, before going solo in 1977. However, it's his collaborations with The Doobie Brothers' Michael McDonald that show off Loggins' yacht credentials the best, co-writing *What A Fool Believes* (he recorded his own version, before The Doobie Brothers released theirs) and 1979's *This Is It*. His most famous songs, however, remain film-related (*I'm Alright* from *Caddyshack*, *Playing With The Boys* from *Top Gun* et al), so much so that he was nicknamed 'King of the Movie Soundtrack'.

Steely Dan

Formed in 1971 by New Yorkers Walter Becker and Donald Fagen, Steely Dan were among the most critically acclaimed bands of their generation. Although they never enjoyed a US No.1 album, 1977's *Aja* did peak at No.3 on home soil and the band achieved consistent success across their career. The quintessential studio outfit, their records are supremely well crafted and the duo's sometimes cryptic lyrics and literary allusions certainly attracted a more cultured kind of listener. Becker passed away in 2017, but the band continues under the stewardship of Fagen.

Toto

Though *Africa* remains their signature number, there's always been so much more to Toto. Formed in 1977 by session players David Paich and Jeff Porcaro (later picking up David Hungate, Steve Lukather, Steve Porcaro and Bobby Kimball), they tasted success almost immediately with their eponymous debut album hitting No.9 on the Billboard chart and single *Hold The Line* going Top 5. Though wedded in the public's mind as one of the main yacht-rock outfits, truth is they were always more musically promiscuous than that, veering from hard rock to blue-eyed soul on those early albums. Only two members from that 1977 line-up are still with the band, yet they're still performing, releasing their latest LP in 2018.

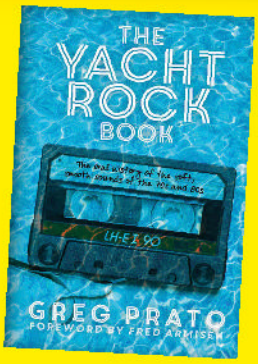
WHAT THEY SAY

"The strict definition of yacht rock is soft pop-rock music made between 1976 and 1984 in Los Angeles by ace session musicians. But I like to think of it more as a feeling... if you can picture Ted Turner sailing his yacht to win the America's Cup in 1980 and it is something he would be listening to, it's yacht rock – regardless of when or where it was made. It's a vibe."
Nicholas Niespodziani, frontman of covers band Yacht Rock Revue, quoted in The Daily Telegraph

"This reassuringly vague escapism spread into middle America, helped by the rise of FM radio and boosted by the idea that women were now controlling household spending and would enjoy smooth but heartfelt ballads."
The Guardian

Further reading

The Yacht Rock Book: The Oral History of the Soft, Smooth Sounds of the 70s and 80s by Greg Prato



Related genres

Soft rock, AOR, FM rock

SUPER FAN

DEVOTED FANS SHOW US THEIR COLLECTIONS AND POP MEMORABILIA

PET SHOP BOYS
OLMAN AGUILAR
COSTA RICA

Q When did you first become a superfan of Pet Shop Boys?

A I was aware of their music as a child, but in 1993 I heard *Very* and its singles which were massive in Latin America. I was hooked instantly and collected everything I could, working my way through their incredible back catalogue.

Q What do you have in your personal collection?

A It's not easy to find things here in Costa Rica but with help from friends in the UK and US I've managed to collect a vast amount of rare vinyl from all over the world, along with CDs, merchandise and promotional display materials.

Q How much have you spent on it over the years?

A It's hard to work it out as there is so much stuff, but it's got to be in excess of $5,000 and counting…

Q What is your favourite item of memorabilia?

A Pet Shop Boys' 1993 period is still very special to me and I remember with fondness, in 2017, getting the ultra-rare *Very* Mexican picture disc and the *Relentless* triple vinyl promo set – years after they were released.

Q Have you ever managed to meet Neil and Chris?

A In 2017, they visited Monterey on tour and I flew there from Costa Rica to meet them. They had a driver waiting who spotted I was a Pethead – he needed help identifying Neil and Chris and some translation assistance, too. So I ended up travelling with their entourage to check them in to their hotel. It was an incredible privilege, they were so friendly and I kept Neil's luggage tag as a unique souvenir.

Q If you could ask Pet Shop Boys a question, what would it be?

A It is hard to imagine a world without a PSB soundtrack, so, are you aware of the enduring impact that you have had and how much you continue to affect the lives of so many?

AND FINALLY…

Q Is there one Holy Grail item of memorabilia that you would love to get your hands on?

A I would love to get hold of the *Suburbia* and *Very*-era T-shirts, they're lovely but very rare now and worth $200+ each. There's also a *Release* mug that I'm looking to add to my collection.

35 YEARS OF SONGS FROM DEACON BLUE AND BEYOND

RICKY ROSS

SHORT STORIES VOL.2

LIVE 2022

PLUS SPECIAL GUEST
HANNAH WHITE

TUESDAY 20 SEPTEMBER
ABERDEEN
TIVOLI THEATRE

WEDNESDAY 21 SEPTEMBER
PERTH
PERTH THEATRE

FRIDAY 23 SEPTEMBER
EDINBURGH
QUEEN'S HALL

SUNDAY 25 SEPTEMBER
GLASGOW
GRCH
NEW AUDITORIUM

TUESDAY 27 SEPTEMBER
SUNDERLAND
FIRE STATION

WEDNESDAY 28 SEPTEMBER
LIVERPOOL
PHILHARMONIC HALL

FRIDAY 30 SEPTEMBER
LEEDS
CITY VARIETIES

SATURDAY 01 OCTOBER
LONDON
CADOGAN HALL

SUNDAY 02 OCTOBER
BIRMINGHAM
TOWN HALL

TUESDAY 04 OCTOBER
BRISTOL
ST GEORGE'S HALL

WEDNESDAY 05 OCTOBER
GUILDFORD
G LIVE

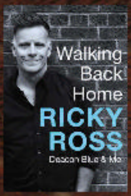
FRIDAY 07 OCTOBER
MILTON KEYNES
THE STABLES

SATURDAY 08 OCTOBER
DISS
THE CORN HALL

SUNDAY 09 OCTOBER
EASTBOURNE
DEVONSHIRE
PARK THEATRE

TUESDAY 11 OCTOBER
BILLERICAY
EMMANUEL
CHURCH

ticketmaster.co.uk



RICKY ROSS'S NEW ALBUM AND MEMOIR OUT NOW

A CHAS COLE FOR CMP ENTERTAINMENT PRESENTATION IN ASSOCIATION WITH DF CONCERTS, ASGARD AND TOPM

TOP 20

GIORGIO MORODER TRACKS

IN AN UNPARALLELED CAREER SPANNING OVER HALF A CENTURY, PEERLESS PRODUCER AND MUSIC MAKER GIORGIO MORODER HAS BEEN THE MASTERMIND BEHIND SOME OF THE MOST DAZZLING MOMENTS IN POP – WE GIVE THE BEST OF THEM A SPIN…

BARRY PAGE

A multiple award-winner, 82-year-old Giorgio Moroder has worked with some of the biggest names in music, including Blondie, David Bowie, Cher, Janet Jackson, Chaka Khan and Freddie Mercury. Thanks to the Italian songwriter and producer's ground-breaking collaborations with the likes of Donna Summer, The Three Degrees and Sparks, he's been described as both the godfather of disco and the founder of EDM, but his name is equally synonymous with classic movie soundtracks and scores. In this career-spanning rundown, we pick out some of his finest and most influential work.

20

GIORGIO

SON OF MY FATHER (1971)

Originally a 1971 hit in Germany for collaborator Michael Holm under the title *Nachts Scheint Die Sonne*, bubblegum pop pioneer Giorgio Moroder released his own Moog-flavoured version, with kooky English lyrics courtesy of long-term collaborator Pete Bellotte. It wasn't a hit, but the band Chicory Tip took a virtual facsimile to the top of the UK charts in 1972, replicating both its synth work and Schaffel beat, which was synonymous with the glam-rock era. Nowadays, the melody is more recognisable on the terraces of English football clubs.

19

FRIDA

TO TURN THE STONE (1982)

This enthralling ballad had originally been recorded by Donna Summer in 1981, but remained in the vaults until her 1996 album, *I'm A Rainbow*. In the interim, it was recorded by ABBA's Anni-Frid Lyngstad, who'd been cherry-picking tracks for her debut solo album, *Something's Going On*. Newly divorced, she found a kindred spirit in the LP's co-producer Phil Collins, whose own marital problems had filtered into 1981's classic *Face Value*. Moroder also recorded a version with Joe Esposito for the collaborative album, *Solitary Men*.

18

DEBBIE HARRY

RUSH RUSH (1983)

Following the critical and commercial failure of their 1982 album, *The Hunter*, Blondie split, leaving Debbie Harry to pick up odd jobs in between caring for guitarist and then-boyfriend Chris Stein, who was suffering with a debilitating autoimmune disorder. One such project was cocaine-referencing single *Rush Rush*, part of Moroder's soundtrack for Brian De Palma's gangster classic, *Scarface*. It was unpopular in the UK, stalling at No.87, but the Happy Mondays were sufficiently impressed to record a version for their often-overlooked 2007 LP, *Uncle Dysfunktional*.

17

DURAN DURAN

BEAUTIFUL LIES (2021)

In 2015, Duran Duran presented Moroder with a *GQ* Inspiration Award in London, where Simon Le Bon remembered his band's performance of the highly-influential *I Feel Love* during the classic five-piece line-up's inaugural show in 1980. They finally got to work with their hero during sessions for their 2021 album, *Future Past*. "Giorgio arrived with his little keyboard in a black case, like Dr Disco coming into the room," Nick Rhodes told *Classic Pop*. "As soon as he put his hands on the keyboard the sound was unmistakably Giorgio Moroder."

16

KENNY LOGGINS

DANGER ZONE (1986)

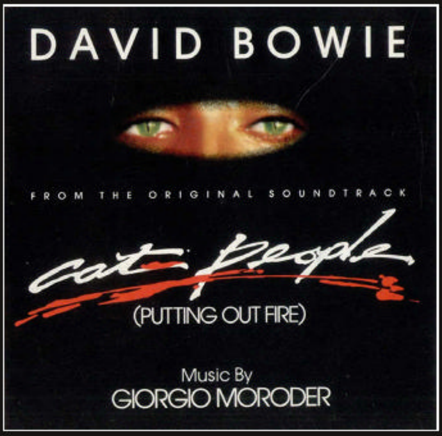
Kenny Loggins, the man behind the US chart-topping theme to *Footloose*, was reportedly not the first choice to perform *Danger Zone*, the identikit rock song that soundtracks the thrilling carrier-deck sequence in Tom Cruise's action blockbuster, *Top Gun*. Big names such as Bryan Adams were touted, but Loggins' appointment resulted in a huge hit Stateside. Moroder later distanced himself from the track after it was used in CNN footage during the Iraq war, but was delighted when it was reprised in this year's box office-busting sequel, *Top Gun: Maverick*.

15

GIORGIO MORODER

74 IS THE NEW 24 (2014)

By 2014, it had been more than 20 years since Moroder's last studio album, *Forever Dancing*, and the musical maestro was more likely to be found on the golf course than in the studio. But, buoyed by a successful collaboration with Daft Punk in 2013, he was persuaded to record a new LP, with guest divas including Britney Spears, Kylie Minogue and Sia. Critics were left disappointed by the resulting *Déjà-Vu* album, but *74 Is The New 24*, with its pounding arpeggios and vocoder effects, hearkened back to Moroder's ground-breaking 70s work.



14

DAVID BOWIE

CAT PEOPLE (PUTTING OUT FIRE) (1982)

Moroder's goth rock theme to the remake of horror movie *Cat People* was recorded in 1981 with Bowie's vocals added at Mountain Studios in Montreux, where a chance meeting with Queen also led to the classic single *Under Pressure*. While Moroder earned a Golden Globe nomination for his movie score, the single was only a minor UK hit, and Bowie expressed his dissatisfaction with the track, re-recording a somewhat leaden version for 1983's *Let's Dance*. In 2009, the original was used to great effect in Quentin Tarantino's *Inglourious Basterds*.

13

DAFT PUNK

GIORGIO BY MORODER (2013)

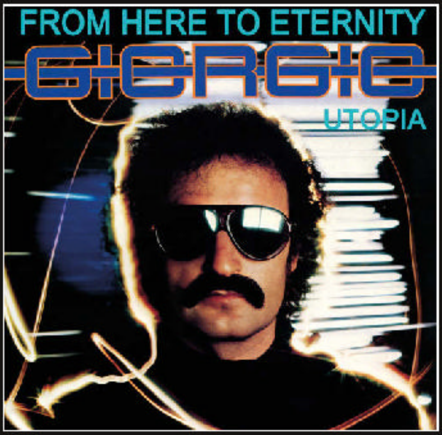
Moroder's career renaissance arguably began with this unusual time-travelling cut from French duo Daft Punk. The nine-minute centrepiece of the electronic act's Grammy Award-winning *Random Access Memories* album, it included sections of autobiographical spoken-word from Giorgio against a palette of genre-shifting electronica that sonically referenced their musical hero. "I was pleasantly surprised when I heard it," Moroder told *Dazed and Confused* in 2013. "It was also kind of emotional to hear my story and a little bit of my sound in there."

12

FREDDIE MERCURY

LOVE KILLS (1984)

Following the promotion of the disco-flavoured *Hot Space* album, Queen's flamboyant frontman hooked up with Moroder to work on *Love Kills*. The producer had sourced a high-quality print of Fritz Lang's iconic 1927 dystopian movie *Metropolis* and wanted to include the song on a soundtrack to accompany its re-release. Although initially earmarked for Queen's next LP, *Love Kills* was eventually released as Freddie Mercury's debut solo single. As a compromise, the band used part of the *Metropolis* footage in the video for their comeback 7", *Radio Ga Ga*.



11

GIORGIO
FROM HERE TO ETERNITY (1977)

As evidenced by a highly experimental album of minimalist electronica issued under the name of Einzelgänger in 1975, Moroder was a huge admirer of Kraftwerk. His love affair with the Kling Klang quartet continued in 1977 with the release of the vocoder-flavoured hit, *From Here To Eternity*, whose parent LP included the declaration: "only electronic keyboards were used", a possible riposte to Queen's "No Synthesizers!" brag. Kraftwerk were equally enamoured with Moroder's disco work, adding more danceable tracks to 1978's *The Man-Machine*.

10

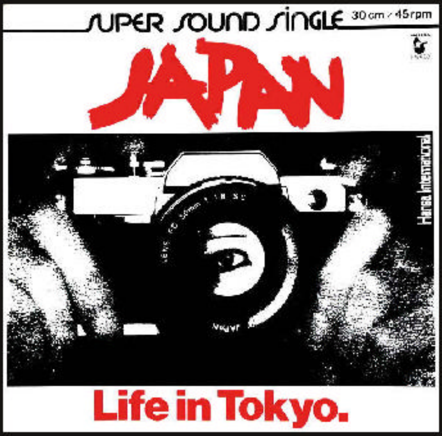
DONNA SUMMER
OUR LOVE (1979)

The Queen of Disco hit her creative and commercial peak in 1979 with the double album *Bad Girls*, which spawned two Billboard No.1s in the sizzling title cut and the Grammy Award-winning *Hot Stuff*. Elsewhere on the singer's seventh LP was *Our Love*, whose rapid-fire beat and ebullient synth would prove highly influential in the creation of both *Temptation* and *Blue Monday*, landmarks in New Order's catalogue. "Barney was obsessed with catching the disco-pulse sound of Giorgio Moroder's electronic music," explained bassist Peter Hook.

09

SIGUE SIGUE SPUTNIK
LOVE MISSILE F1-11 (1986)

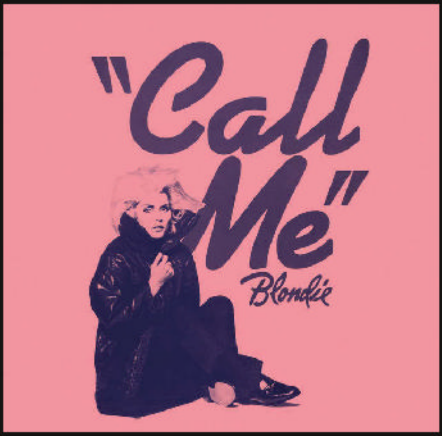
Overhyped and reviled in equal measure, Sigue Sigue Sputnik spent more time in the tabloids than the charts in 1986, but the band had the talent to match their hubris. Tapping into their potential was Moroder, whose production on their debut long-player, *Flaunt It*, suggested he'd bought into their collective vision as the future of rock and roll. With its hypnotic rockabilly bassline and clutter of samples and sound effects, chaotic debut single *Love Missile F1-11* typified the band's approach, but they were unable to replicate its Top 10 success.



08

JAPAN
LIFE IN TOKYO (1979)

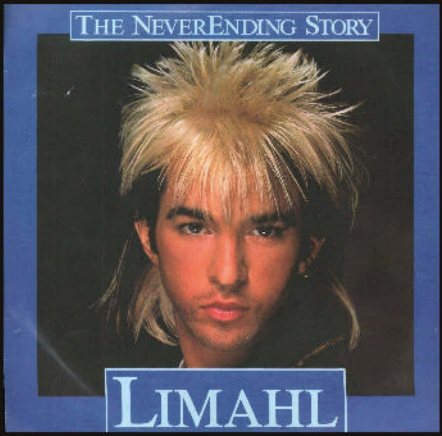
Like many of the acts who were pigeonholed as New Romantics in the early 80s, Japan were admirers of Moroder's work with Donna Summer and Sparks. Now focused on a more contemporary electronic sound, the transitioning act hired him to produce their next single. In *European Son*, frontman David Sylvian felt he had the perfect song, but was taken aback when this was rejected. Instead, the debonair dresser was presented with a stack of demos to work with, one of which would eventually morph into the proto-Duran Duran cut, *Life In Tokyo*.



07

BLONDIE
CALL ME (1980)

Following 1978's Grammy Award-winning *Midnight Express* soundtrack, Moroder was commissioned to score Paul Schrader's 1980 movie, *American Gigolo*. Blondie, who'd embraced disco on *Heart Of Glass* and had covered *I Feel Love* live, were hired to perform the theme song. The band were rewarded with their second transatlantic No.1 although much of the heavy lifting in the studio was done by Moroder's close-knit coterie of musicians, including future Pet Shop Boys producer Harold Faltermeyer, who performed the incredible keyboard solo.



06

LIMAHL
THE NEVERENDING STORY (1984)

In the summer of 1983, the bizarrely-coiffured Limahl was fired as the singer of Kajagoogoo, but his solo work would soon eclipse his erstwhile bandmates' post-*Too Shy* achievements. Moroder had been hired to provide additional music for Wolfgang Petersen's fantasy movie *The NeverEnding Story*, and was persuaded to hire Limahl to perform its dreamy theme tune. Its success boded well for further collaborative work, but the pair were unable to recreate the magic on 1986's *Colour All My Days*, an album that *Smash Hits* described as "sickeningly bland".

05

SPARKS

THE NUMBER ONE SONG IN HEAVEN (1979)

Such was the all-pervading power of disco, that by the end of the 70s, even veteran acts like The Beach Boys and the Stones were incorporating it into their music. Hitching their own ride on the bandwagon were eccentric glam rockers Sparks, who, under Moroder's mentorship, took their music in a dramatic new – and highly influential – electronic direction. The highlight of their first collaborative album was this celestial epic, the pulsing edit of which gave the Mael brothers their first hit single in four years.

04

BERLIN

TAKE MY BREATH AWAY (1986)

Kenny Loggins' US hit *Danger Zone* was left trailing in the jet stream of this second single from the *Top Gun* soundtrack. Co-penned by jobbing lyricist Tom Whitlock, and propelled by a distinctive synth-bass part (courtesy of the decade's ubiquitous Yamaha DX7), this classic love song saw Moroder teaming up with new wavers Berlin, having previously worked together on 1984's *No More Words* single. A transatlantic chart-topper, it picked up both an Oscar and a Golden Globe in 1987, and was a hit again in 1990 prompted by its use in a car advert.

03

IRENE CARA

FLASHDANCE... WHAT A FEELING (1983)

A veritable masterclass in euphoric pop, this multi-award-winning US No.1 saw Moroder join forces with Irene Cara, whose star had been rising since playing Coco Hernandez in 1980 teen-musical movie, *Fame*, for which she'd also performed the theme song. The lyrics were penned by both Cara and Moroder's long-term drummer, Keith Forsey, who went on to co-write and produce Simple Minds' biggest hit, *Don't You (Forget About Me)*. Forsey and Moroder later worked on Cara's *What A Feelin'* LP, which spawned the US hits *Why Me?* and *Breakdance*.

02

GIORGIO MORODER AND PHILIP OAKEY

TOGETHER IN ELECTRIC DREAMS (1984)

Electric Dreams was the largely forgettable feature film debut of music video director Steve Barron, whose numerous clients included the Human League. He suggested that Phil Oakey was the perfect fit for a song Moroder had written for the film's soundtrack, and Phil obliged, penning lyrics en route to the studio. Although he told *Smash Hits* he was unhappy with the end result, the pair teamed up again for an album in 1985. Since then, the BAFTA-nominated theme has been a staple of the League's live shows.

01

DONNA SUMMER

I FEEL LOVE (1977)

Surprisingly, Giorgio Moroder had begun to tire of the synthesizer by the time of recording Donna Summer's fifth studio album, *I Remember Yesterday*, in 1976. However, once lyricist Pete Bellotte's nostalgic concept for the LP had been formalised, with each song evoking a different musical style (from the 1940s onwards), it was the only instrument that could possibly represent the sound of the future. For the closing track *I Feel Love*, Bellotte and newly loved-up Summer wrote the lyrics, while the innovative, trance-like backing track was put together by Moroder and his crack team, including engineer Robbie Wedel, who crucially knew his way around an often unreliable Moog synth. The end result was a watershed moment in pop history, which even pricked the ears of fellow visionary Brian Eno, who famously relayed his findings to David Bowie. It's been covered by a wide range of artists, including Bronski Beat and Marc Almond, who included it in a memorable 1985 medley with Summer's orgasmic *Love To Love You Baby* and John Leyton's spectral spine-tingler *Johnny Remember Me*. More recently, it's been used in a Lexus advert, its tagline of "feels like nothing that came before" of relevance to both the car and the seminal track.

CLASSIC moroder

E=MC2
Cat no: V171

FROM HERE TO ETERNITY
Cat no: V197

BEST OF ELECTRONIC DISCO (2LP)
Cat no: V312

E=MC2
Cat no: REP 5317

FROM HERE TO ETERNITY
Cat no: REP 5319

BEST OF ELECTRONIC DISCO
Cat no: REP 5180

INNOVISIONS
Cat no: REPUK 1432

MUNICH MACHINE GET ON THE FUNK TRAIN
Cat no: REP 5221

MUNICH MACHINE BODY SHINE
Cat no: REP 5226

SOLITARY MEN
Cat no: REP 5316

THE BEST OF GIORGIO MORODER
Cat no: REP 4825

KNIGHTS IN WHITE SATIN
Cat no: REP 5215

Repertoire

WWW.**REPERTOIRERECORDS**.COM

Reviews

Erasure return with bold new album *Day-Glo (Based On A True Story)*

© Phil Sharp

THE HOT LIST 78
Happy Mondays, Brian Eno, *Moonage Daydream*, Embrace, Kasabian

NEW RELEASES 79
Erasure, Paul Heaton & Jacqui Abbott, Robbie Williams, William Orbit, Howard Jones, Beth Orton, The Proclaimers, Blancmange, Mark Owen, Lightning Seeds, Oliver Sim, Suede, Yungblud, Phil Thornalley, Richard Marx, Julian Lennon, Ricky Ross, The House Of Love, Tim Burgess, Yeah Yeah Yeahs, Ezra Furman

REISSUES 86
Blondie, Ultravox, The Cure, Duran Duran, Various Artists: NOW compilations, Shakespears Sister, The Communards, Alphaville, Sheena Easton, David Sylvian, Toyah, Roxy Music, Matt Bianco, The Finn Brothers, The Bluetones, Beastie Boys, Paula Abdul, Madness, Arrow, Paul Weller, Space

LIVE 94
Let's Rock Shrewsbury

BOOKS 96
Abba At 50 by Carl Magnus Palm; *Electronically Yours: Vol. 1* by Martyn Ware; *Glam! When Superstars Rocked The World, 1970-74* by Mark Paytress; *Bowie @ 75* by Martin Popoff

RATINGS

EXCELLENT ★★★★★
VERY GOOD ★★★★
AVERAGE ★★★
PATCHY ★★
POOR ★

THE

HOT LIST

WHAT WE'RE TALKING ABOUT AT CLASSIC POP TOWERS

STEVE HARNELL

© Kevin Cummins

1 HAPPY MONDAYS

TART TART

As a tribute to their late bassist Paul Ryder, the Mondays have released a three-track digital EP of *Squirrel And G-Man…* lead single *Tart Tart* from 1987. In addition to its 2009 remaster are two unreleased versions: the first a John Peel Session from 1989 plus a live cut culled from a Sheffield University show that year. Shaun Ryder explains: "This special release of *Tart Tart* showcases the unique musical talent of our brother Paul Ryder who passed from this world. We will all miss you Horse. He brought the funk and the rock'n'roll to Happy Mondays." All profits from the release will be donated to Music Cares, a charity which was chosen by Paul's daughter Amelia.

2 BRIAN ENO

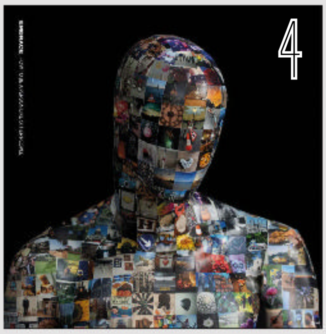
FOREVERANDEVERNOMORE

It's been 17 years since we've heard an album's worth of vocals from Brian Eno so *Foreverandevernomore* is a break from the instrumental work that's characterised his output for most of the last two decades. A 10-track offering, its lead song, *There Were Bells*, was written for his gig last summer with brother Roger at the Acropolis. A rare return to the world of live performance, it was 45°C in Athens on the day of the show with wildfires raging just outside the city, prompting Eno's waggish response: "Here we are at the birthplace of Western civilisation, probably witnessing the end of it."

3 MOONAGE DAYDREAM

DIR: BRETT MORGEN

If you caught Morgen's Kurt Cobain documentary *Montage Of Heck*, you'll know the director's not averse to ripping up the filmmaking rulebook. The feature-length *Moonage Daydream* explores David Bowie's creative and spiritual journey and is told through kaleidoscopic, unseen footage, performance and music. With narration from Bowie himself, it's the first documentary to be officially sanctioned by the late star's estate.



4 EMBRACE

HOW TO BE A PERSON LIKE OTHER PEOPLE

You can always depend on the McNamara brothers to deliver fist-pumping anthems and heartfelt ballads, and they've not left us down on album No.8. The soaring *Death Is Not The End* and *We Are It* are live favourites in waiting while piano-led slowie *Remember Me* finds the Yorkshire indie rockers at their subdued best. Conceptually, it's Embrace at their most loved-up as lead singer Danny McNamara reflects: "I met my wife nearly 10 years ago now, we have an incredible daughter and another on the way, but the most loving thing she's done for me over the years is to try to show me how to love, how to feel, how to be a person like other people. This album is about that journey, that story – and it's the most joyous, uplifting, upbeat, soulful thing we've ever done."

5 KASABIAN

THE ALCHEMIST'S EUPHORIA

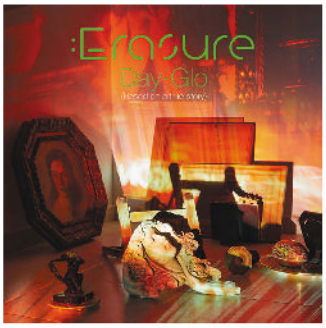
The $64,000 question is, of course, how will Kasabian fare in their new Tom Meighan-less incarnation? Well, on this evidence, it's very much business as usual with Serge Pizzorno up front. Stylistically as all over the map as ever, highlights include the stomping *Scriptvre* with its dramatic string and bass stabs, the Prodigy-like attack of *Rocket Fuel* and squelchy electro of *Star Gazer*. *Tuve* (pronounced The Ultra View) throws us a dummy as its coda morphs into a graceful *Echoes/Dark Side*-era Pink Floyd homage. Ambitious, unpredictable and intriguing.

© Phil Sharp

ERASURE
DAY-GLO (BASED ON A TRUE STORY)

MUTE

★★★★



AFTER 37 YEARS, VINCE 'N' ANDY ARE STILL REWRITING THE RULEBOOK WITH AN ALBUM THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO CATEGORISE. REMIX SET? NEW WORK? DOES IT MATTER?

You can't accuse Erasure of not maximising their output. In addition to their seven singles boxsets, seven live albums, six Best Of compilations and five fanclub-only rarities sets, last year's *The Neon Remixed* joined 1987's *The Two Ring Circus* in Erasure's boutique reworkings department.

Overlooked in all that curating hoopla, 2018's "What on earth is *this*?" detonation of *World Be Gone* as *World Beyond*, made with Belgian classical ensemble Echo Collective, proved just how far Vince Clarke and Andy Bell are willing to use their core albums as a template for mischief, rather than as a definitive artistic statement.

However, *World Beyond* is perfectly staid in comparison with what's being marketed as Erasure's 19th new studio album.

Although *The Neon* is officially the source material for *Day-Glo (Based On A True Story)*, only the most pedantic would try to call this a remix album. Bored in lockdown, Vince used the stems from *The Neon*, including its unreleased tracks, to see what new song ideas it would spark.

Meanwhile, as he's explained to *CP*, Andy usually begins lyrics by improvising wordless vocals around basic instrumental tracks until stories start suggesting themselves. (Interestingly, Vince's fellow ex-bandmate Alison Moyet uses the same technique.) With Vince's new post-*Neon* pieces ready to go, Bell freeformed more scat-sounding vocals, but this time leaves them alone.

Anyone fearing this sounds like Erasure's jazz album can rest easy. Instead, *Day-Glo…* takes the duo further into clubland than even *The Neon Remixed* ventured. It's similar in spirit to Underworld's early frenetic club reportage, Andy resembling a clubber too lost in music to have any coherent thoughts about the headrush he's experiencing. *Inside Out* and *Based On A True Story* are delirious with possibilities as Vince fires out his hardest beats, more in line with Clarke: Hartnoll than the pop landscape of Erasure. *3 Strikes And You're Out* is the closest we get to a proper song, veering into *Always* territory, though the semi-spoken *The Conman* is a parallel universe where Erasure try to be Yello for a few minutes.

Barely 30 minutes long and naturally less polished than your average Erasure album, this could easily topple over into self-indulgence. Only the moody *The Shape Of Things*, essentially a highly meta remix of *3 Strikes…*, seems unfinished.

What's left is Erasure at their boldest. For a duo who've always thrived on being playful, such experimentation suits them just fine. They're too good at dizzying pop songs to use this as their full-time template. For larking about, however, *Day-Glo…* is an appropriately colourful whirlwind. **John Earls**

PAUL HEATON & JACQUI ABBOTT
N.K-POP

VIRGIN EMI

★★★★

© Alex Lake

Described by Paul Heaton as "K-Pop from the wrong side of the border," his fifth album with Jacqui Abbott is the duo's first since *Manchester Calling* returned them to No.1 after a 22-year gap. Paul has also won his long-overdue first award in the interim, for Outstanding Song Collection at The Ivors.

Back at his commercial peak, with the industry finally catching up with the public in recognising

him as a superb melodicist, Heaton and his ideal vocal foil would have been forgiven for bathing in the acclaim. The warm side of their duets means *N.K-Pop* would have amply satisfied if they'd kept it cosy. Sure enough, relationship drama *Too Much For One (Not Enough For Two)* and drinking lament *The Good Times* which open the album are infectious (if sardonic) tales to reliably cheer up the nation. Even lockdown hoedown *I Ain't Going Nowhere This Year* is more avuncular shrug than furious attack.

When collecting his Ivor, Heaton recalled how his late mother warned him never to lose his music's political side, because "Without that, you're just a shorter, fatter Tony Hadley." Honouring his mum, *N.K-Pop* is his most explicitly political album since The Housemartins. *Sunny Side Up*'s buoyant attack on right-wing newspapers and its companion call for social unity in the closing *His Master's Game* are all the more powerful for capturing their ability for empathy instead of ranting. Yet the highlight is the anti-nationalist stomp, *My Mother's Womb*. An atypically punky assault, its chorus – "Fuck being British, fuck being English/ I'm from my mother's womb" – is powerfully delivered sloganeering.

At the other end of the duo's catalogue, *Still* is as beautiful and sparse as anything Heaton has ever written. A devastating ballad about the loss of a child, it's doubly effective for keeping the arrangement minimal, allowing the vocals to gently console the listener.

There are further Radio Two mainstays-in-waiting elsewhere, but *N.K-Pop* is Heaton & Abbott on the attack. Let's salute our dictatorial pop overlords. **JE**

ROBBIE WILLIAMS
XXV

COLUMBIA

★★★★

The orchestral makeover trend has seen everyone from Peter Gabriel to Pete Tong and even Metallica giving their back catalogues a symphonic scrub-up, with mixed results. Now, marking 25 years of solo superstardom, it's Robbie Williams' turn to get some proper musicians in. But, rather than go with the usual London Symphony or Royal Philharmonic, Williams and his team – including long-time wingman Guy Chambers – have hooked up

with Dutch jazz-pop ensemble Metropole Orkest. It's an inspired move that feels akin to a meeting of musical like-minds, as opposed to a bunch of players slumming it between Rachmaninovs.

They've also largely shied away from radical reinventions. Unlike Take That's *Odyssey*, on which the majestic *Rule The World* was "re-imagined" to death, no Williams classics were harmed in the making of this album. Instead, we get artful embellishments: *Let Me Entertain You* is given added oomph by a horn section and *No Regrets* – still his best song – is reworked with the drama of a Bond theme. Speaking of which, elsewhere, *Millennium*'s John Barry strings are augmented with a gorgeous brassy countermelody, *Angels* takes flight with a suitably heavenly (but tastefully restrained) choir and *Strong*, which swaps late-90s Oasis guitar for swooning strings, has never sounded…. well, stronger. And yes, Kylie returns for another playful run through *Kids*.

If Robbie's stock has dipped a little lately, then this, his first hits package since 2010, is a reminder of just how good the Williams/Chambers songbook is. Hopefully it will also prompt a reassessment of underrated gems like *Tripping* (from 2005's *Intensive Care*), and 2012's *Candy*, co-written with old frenemy Gary Barlow and here leaning into even more of a swinging salsa vibe.

There's one new song, *Lost* – basically… fine – plus three more on the 29-track deluxe edition, which also includes a merging of *Angels* with an AI-completed version of Beethoven's unfinished *Tenth Symphony*. After listening to *XXV*, you'd have to conclude that Ludwig Van is in pretty good company. **Paul Kirkley**

WILLIAM ORBIT
THE PAINTER

RHINO

★★★★½

REVITALISED AFTER EIGHT YEARS AWAY, THE STELLAR PRODUCER CRAFTS HIS COMEBACK SOLO ALBUM WITHOUT FEELING THE NEED TO RAID HIS CONTACTS BOOK TOO HEAVILY

You wouldn't wish the drug-induced breakdown that William Orbit endured on your worst enemy. It meant he was mostly unable to work in the eight years since a pair of albums from 2014, *Orbit Symphonic* and *Strange Cargo 5*. That the Madonna/Blur/All Saints producer released two albums in the same year was typical of his workload once Bassomatic's *Fascinating Rhythm* finally propelled him into the limelight in 1990 after a decade of toil. By then, the previously inspiring Orbit had just begun to seem a little formulaic.

Orbit is keen to emphasise he carried on at least trying to make music while he was away. Whatever the genesis of his comeback album, *The Painter* is the sound of a man revitalised, falling in love with life and music again. The unifying aspect of his productions, whether in the sunshine vibe of *Pure Shores* or the confrontational thrash of Blur's *Trimm Trabb*, has always been joy and playfulness. It's an ethos shot through every note of these 13 songs. In the opening *Duende*, there's a bouncing keyboard riff just before Katie Melua's vocals kick in. You don't need to know Orbit's backstory, or indeed his back catalogue, to feel instantly transported. It's a blissful noise, and one that only William Orbit has been able to recreate since the first *Strange Cargo* album in 1987.

The euphoria rarely subsides. It's thoughtful dance from someone expert in crafting ambient music, sure, but there's a kinetic kick to much of Orbit's 19th artist album, too. Based on a 1985 sample by late Tanzanian singer Hukwe Zawose, *Heshima Kwa Hukwe* is a sinuous banger, wriggling delightfully as it refuses to be pinned down. First single *Colours Colliding* is similarly free flowing, with veteran maverick Polly Scattergood an inspired choice of pop diva as her vocals never take the obvious route.

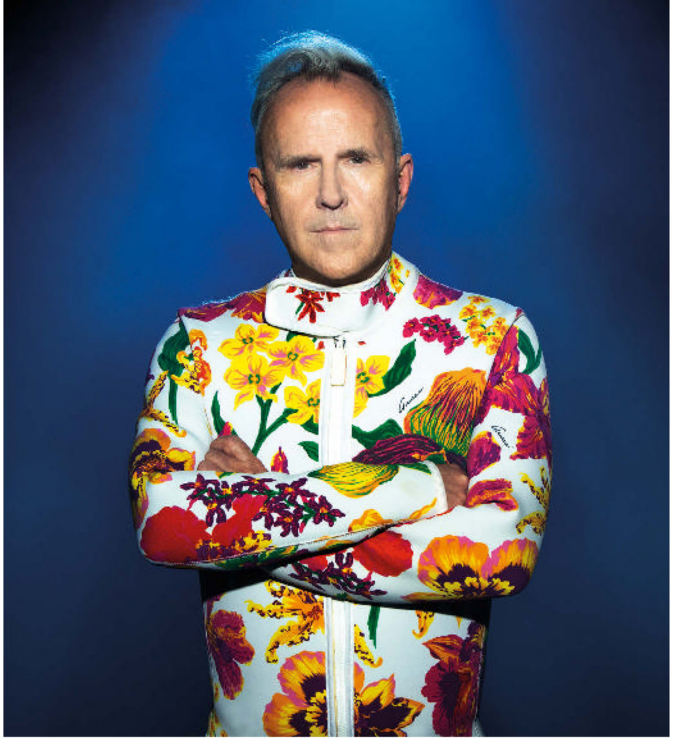
Madonna recorded a potential collaboration for *The Painter*, but has yet to give permission to use their song. Orbit says it could have dominated this album, and it's easy to hear what he means. Rather than an easy return full of big names, the record shines as a unified vision. Melua, Beth Orton and Georgia are the biggest mainstream names, and they all happily blend in with Orbit rediscovering how to leave listeners feeling energised. Indeed, Orton's spoken-word on *I Paint What I See* is typically charismatic – then its 17-minute *Epic Mix* on the vinyl edition is a cinematic adventure.

Celebrate the return of one of the best producers around, here discovering a whole new palette with which to excite a fresh generation of listeners. **JE**

HOWARD JONES
DIALOGUE

DTOX

★★★★



Howard Jones has always been one of the Second British Invasion's most glass half-full stars. The title of *Things Can Only Get Better* is essentially his motto. But can the synth-pop maestro retain such positivity with an album recorded in – and heavily inspired by – the pandemic?

You don't have to wait long to find out. Self-described as the most optimistic song he's ever written, *Dialogue*'s opening track is a testament to the power of community and perhaps those days when banging saucepans on a Thursday evening became part of the national routine. Thankfully, *Celebrate It Together* is a little more tuneful, its mix of stop-start electro-funk, slinky disco guitar licks and vocodered melodies resembling a race through Daft Punk's greatest hits: there are definite echoes of *Digital Love* and *Get Lucky* here.

Jones' 12th album, the third of a four-part series to conclude with next year's *Global Citizen*, *Dialogue* contains several other pick-me-ups. Featuring the chirps of a nightingale that took up residency near Jones' home studio, closer *I Believe In You* is essentially a hug in musical form which ends with the a cappella advice of, "Let those bad weather clouds go shimmering by." The propulsive electronica of *Who You Really Want To Be*, meanwhile, leans fully into the record's ethos that common ground can trump divisiveness. It's a sentiment which, given the obvious subject matter ("Lonely lockdown, too much downtime/ Tempted to demonise, see from both sides"), is perhaps just a little too wide-eyed.

Yet the follow-up to 2019's *Transform* is just as effective when it brings down the mood. For proof, check the melancholic Royksopp-esque *To Feel Love* or *Formed By The Stars*, whose throbbing synths and slow-motion beats you could imagine soundtracking Ryan Gosling's night-time escapades in *Drive*. Furthermore, *My One True Love* balances gleaming production with contemplations on Jones' darkest fears. Despite the odd lyrical clunker, *Dialogue* deserves to get people talking. **Jon O'Brien**

BETH ORTON
WEATHER ALIVE

PARTISAN

★★★★

It's been two decades and change since Beth Orton's patented brand of folktronica – forged from early collaborations with the likes of William Orbit and The Chemical Brothers – saw her dubbed Britain's comedown queen. In the years since, she's flipped back and forth between the folk and electronica poles, but *Weather Alive*, her first album in six years, is the former BRIT winner's most assured and coherent since 1999's *Central Reservation*.

It's hasn't been achieved without suffering, though. This is a record burdened with a weight of sadness, in which the 51-year-old singer-songwriter channels her experience of grief, illness and a rootless sense of dislocation and disappointment into a self-produced collection of songs so bruised and vulnerable that, when she sings "I'm too exposed, honey I'm rubbed raw," you don't doubt her for a second.

Recorded with a handpicked cast of sublime players, including jazz saxophonist Alabaster dePlume and multi-instrumentalist Shahzad Ismaily, *Weather Alive* is bookended by two spare, woozily hypnotic seven-minute epics. On the title track, Orton's trademark gauzy vocals float gossamer-like above an evocative rumble of piano rolls and mournful synth stabs that recall *Spirit Of Eden*-era Talk Talk, while *Unwritten* closes out the album with shards of sadness and regret half-whispered over textured washes of ambient piano, guitar and shuffling drums.

Between these points, *Fractals* is inspired by the deaths of Orton's musical fellow travellers, Andrew Weatherall and Hal Willner. It's a skittish, jazzy number that pushes her fragile vocals to breaking point. *Forever Young* and *Lonely*, meanwhile, are painfully heartsick cries of anguish ("Come and see what a mess they've made of me").

This, then, is the sound of an older, more careworn Beth Orton navigating an altogether more existential sort of comedown. Written on a beat-up old piano in her garden studio, the demos were bleak enough to scare off her former label. Expect a few red faces when Anti realise they've passed on Orton's best record in more than 20 years. **PK**

THE PROCLAIMERS
DENTURES OUT

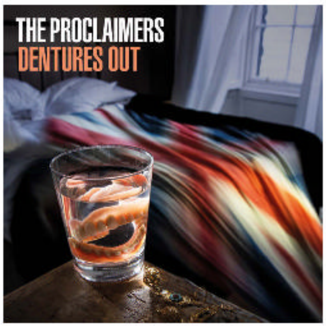
COOKING VINYL

★★★★

What do you do when you reach 60 and everything seems a bit, um, shit? Well, if you're The Proclaimers, you make an album railing against literally everything.

Dentures Out is a short, sharp squall punching away at themes of nostalgia, fate, newspaper barons and various strands of a modern life that's undeniably rubbish. There's still a fire in the hearts and minds of the Reid twins, now approaching 40 years together as a pop turn, and they're saying out loud what everyone's thinking, protesting at the preposterousness and idiocy of a backward-looking nation.

Produced, as their previous two have been, by Dave Eringa, album 12 features contributions from Dave's old mucker James Dean Bradfield from Manic Street Preachers, who adds guitar to the title track and *Things As They Are*. Such is the Nicky Wire feel to some of these couplets, you could half imagine the Manics coming out with some of these numbers themselves without batting an eyelid.



The string-laced *Everything Must Go*-ness of *Things As They Are*, lends itself to a film theme; popstars at Butlins get it in the neck on the *Parklife*-ian romp *The Recent Past*, and *News To Nietzsche* is an instant earworm tackling Superman's sexuality among many other topics.

It's not all fury, *Signs Of Love* takes its foot off the windpipe of today's ills for a brief two minutes for a genuinely cheery musing on how love shows itself across the ages, and *Sundays By John Calvin* is a melancholic reflection on the twins' fun-free upbringing under Calvinism. Meanwhile, the sweeping *Feast Your Eyes* reflects on the loneliness and tedium of the first lockdown and *Drop Dead Destiny* takes a swipe at fate and the foolish idea of clinging to a sense of it.

© Murdo Macleod

To longtime fans, *Dentures Out* will be another welcome blast of a duo firing on all cylinders with breathless perfection and panache, and as for any passing admirers who have, perhaps unfairly, atomised the brothers down to a jolly singalong about walking, it may come as a rather nice surprise. *Dentures Out* really is an album to sink your teeth into. **Ian Wade**

BLANCMANGE
PRIVATE VIEW

LONDON

★★★½

No-one could ever accuse Blancmange, now essentially a Neil Arthur solo project, of resting on their laurels. *Private View* is the 15th (yes, 15th!) album from the finest 80s band named after a wobbly dessert since their reformation in 2011.

Thankfully, its 10 typically idiosyncratic tracks prove they haven't succumbed to the law of diminishing returns. In fact, no doubt buoyed by reuniting with guitarist David Rhodes and being back on the London label of their heyday, the follow-up to instrumental double album *Nil By Mouth IV/V* is a genuine contender for their strongest second-phase release yet.

Some Times These is a pandemic anthem that sits somewhere between Berlin-era Bowie and Foo Fighters' similarly-named modern classic, while *I Tried To Be You* and *Reduced Voltage* both channel the kind of clinical electronica that briefly saw Blancmange rival OMD as top tier chart synth-poppers. Best of all is *Here We Go Go*, a moody, majestic electro-ballad that's apparently been lodged inside Arthur's brain since 1980.

Always so instrumental to their appeal, the frontman's absurdist way with words is still very much in evidence, too, whether reeling off a list of daily chores on the percussive *Everything Is Connected* or pondering about learning semaphore on electro-rock opener *What's Your Name?* A case of quantity over quality this is not. **JO**

MARK OWEN
LAND OF DREAMS

BMG

★★★★

In among all the many strange events the world has conjured up lately, the idea that one of the year's most diverse and exciting pop releases would be a Mark Owen solo record is right up there for implausibility. Yet, nine years after the public last told him to clear off from his Take That vacations, Owen unveils a startlingly excellent and life-affirming collection.

From his previous four solo albums, you might expect Take That's most straightforwardly affable member to create the lovable acoustic moods of *You Only Want Me* and *Gone Gone Gone*. Less predictable, however, are the Metronomy-flavoured funk that drives *Come Back*, *Boy's* Flaming Lips psychedelia or the *Chorus*-era Erasure anthemics lifting the album's closing track, *World*.

Where Owen really shocks is *Magic*, a towering banger worthy of Kylie and Dua Lipa, in which his falsetto reaches previously unexplored levels of disco dramatics.

Titled after moving with his family to Los Angeles, *Land Of Dreams* sees Owen having a ton of fun away from music industry pressures and completely revitalising his songwriting as he does so.

With Take That floundering recently as a trio, you'd hope Gary Barlow takes note of his bandmate's late blossoming. Having recently turned 50, Owen is only now starting to have his greatest days. **JE**

LIGHTNING SEEDS
SEE YOU IN THE STARS

BMG

★★★★

Ian Broudie recently argued that 2009's confidence-knocking *Four Winds* didn't feel much like a Lightning Seeds album. That's not a claim likely to be levelled at its belated follow-up. Indeed, much of this seventh studio effort plays like an alternative greatest hits. Lead single *Sunshine*, a strong contender for Liverpool's most joyous ode to the big ball in the sky since The Beatles' *Good Day Sunshine*, shares a similarly heraldic quality with *The Life of Riley*.

Broudie has acknowledged that the familiar-sounding brass melody on *Green Eyes* is a postscript to *Pure*, while *Emily Smiles* – penned with Terry Hall – mirrors the perky indie-pop of their previous team-up, *Lucky You*. The latter even opens with an emphatic chant which could easily be incorporated into *Three Lions'* inevitable next chart assault during Qatar '22.

If this all sounds a little regressive, then the foot-stomping *Live To Love You*, one of two co-writes with The Coral's James Skelly, and the classic girl-group flourishes of *Walk Another Mile* prove the Seeds still possess the power to surprise. Likewise, the atypical subject matter of *Fit For Purpose*, a string-soaked track about battling depression so reassuring it should be prescribed on the NHS. It's clear from these 10 sharp, sweet tunes that the master of jollified pop has rediscovered his mojo. **JO**

OLIVER SIM
HIDEOUS BASTARD

XL

★★★½

Halfway through planning his debut solo album, The xx singer Oliver Sim noticed that he was writing a lot about shame. Slowly, Sim realised he wanted to declare he's been living with HIV since he was 17. His health no longer secret, he's been freed instead to celebrate his life.

Fruit is wonderful gliding funk, the deep and sonorous voice familiar from The xx's dubstep dramas more teasing here as Sim edges towards the dancefloor. *Fruit* features the

unmistakable backing vocals of Jimmy Somerville, whose other contribution to semi-title track *Hideous* is even stronger. Sim is defiant, Somerville beautiful in a cameo as the voice of a guardian angel.

The album peaks with *Sensitive Child*, a tribal chant where Sim's mothership bandmate Jamie xx's production is as inventive as on his own acclaimed solo album *In Colour*. Sadly, the two working together seemingly holds *Hideous Bastard* back elsewhere. A handful of songs glide past, Sim letting his voice coast and Jamie using pristine beats to disguise the lack of a memorable song under the sleek surface. It's a shame, because at his best Sim is a powerful talent. With fellow xx singer Romy also making an album with Jamie, the band's hiatus might carry on a while yet. On this evidence, there's plenty of fascinating diversions open to them when they do return. **JE**

SUEDE
AUTOFICTION

BMG

★★★★½

Suede's best album since 1996's *Coming Up*, they suddenly recapture an anger not perfected since their earliest days. Richard Oakes' guitars have never been more untamed, Brett Anderson is as imperiously annoyed with life as he was in the *So Young* era and Simon Gilbert remains a bizarrely overlooked powerhouse drummer. *Drive Myself Home* is a classic trademark ballad, but it's the variety of savage punk, pop and New Wave vitriol which impresses most: sinister post-punk march *Black Ice* is like nothing else from Suede, while also wildly addictive. Magnificent. **JE**

YUNGBLUD
YUNGBLUD

LOCOMOTION/GEFFEN

★★★½

Those who moan modern pop is bereft of personalities have clearly overlooked Doncaster's Dominic Harrison, aka eyelinered emo-pop scamp Yungblud. He wears his influences on his sleeve: his vocals are generally a poutier variant on Billie Joe Armstrong of Green Day's bratty snarl while, on lead single *The Funeral*, he's channelling Billy Idol's propulsive stadium punk. Crucially, this third album has plenty of decent tunes and air-punching anthems such as *Cruel Kids*, and the Cure-sampling *Tissues* should keep him in Rimmel and hair gel for the foreseeable future. **Will Simpson**

PHIL THORNALLEY
NOW THAT I HAVE YOUR ATTENTION

LOJINX

★★★★

Phil Thornalley shaped the 80s pop-rock landscape, working with Duran Duran, The Cure and Thompson Twins. On his new solo effort, the *Torn* co-writer and multi-instrumentalist dabbles in that decade's more rustic sounds: check the Traveling Wilburys-vibing *Hell Bent On Compromise*. However, Thornalley's fifth album is more a loving homage to the rock'n'roll of the 70s. *Fast Car* channels ELO's orchestral palette, while *Heaven In A Hash Pipe* exudes a Bolanesque swagger. Proof that a good melody never goes out of style. **Annie Zaleski**

RICHARD MARX
SONGWRITER

BMG

★★

A 20-song double album, the *Right Here Waiting* and *Hazard* singer's 13th LP is divided into pop, rock, country and ballad segments. Yet, rather than show the variety of Marx's craft, there's an abundance of slightly staid mid-paced would-be anthems. He wrote for NSYNC, and much of *Songwriter* seems designed to be covered as a boyband's earnest ballad. Even relatively pacy workouts like *Shame On You* are undercut by his bombastic delivery. It's certainly slick and polished, but there's also a sense that he's keeping inner passions at arm's length. **JE**

JULIAN LENNON
JUDE
BMG

★★★

When Julian Lennon re-emerged with a cover of *Imagine* in April this year, critics were quick to suggest this was the 59-year-old finally reconciling himself with his father's legacy.

Truth is, though, that John's first-born has rarely run away from dad's shadow. 1991's *Saltwater* had a distinct *Sgt Pepper* vibe, complete with actual George Harrison guitar, while the video for 1998's *I Don't Wanna Know* was a comic gallop through the Fabs' history.

Given that *Imagine* cover and this album's *Hey Jude*-referencing title, you might be thinking this will be Julian's *Flaming Pie*; the record to see him fully commit to those Beatles sounds.

Except there's probably more of Tears For Fears' Orzabal and Smith than Lennon and McCartney on this, Julian's seventh studio album and first in over a decade.

Not that Lennon Sr isn't invoked here – "We pray for peace," sings Julian on the luxuriant, piano-powered *Breathe*, while on the muscular *Every Little Moment* he talks of "the sins of the father". Some pain, it seems, never heals.

Jude runs the gamut from post-Britpop rockers (*Save Me*, *Lucky Ones*) to acoustic balladry (*Not One Night*) to the lush Coldplay-isms of *Love Never Dies*. Though it lacks any clear stand-out, there are no obvious clangers either. **Steve O'Brien**

RICKY ROSS
SHORT STORIES VOL.2
COOKING VINYL

★★★★

A decade after a Scottish contemporary, The Blue Nile's Paul Buchanan, released his only solo album, *Mid Air*, with songs reduced to piano and voice arrangements, Deacon Blue's Ricky Ross adopts a similar approach with equally tender results. Indeed, they share values lyrically – *Spanish Shoes*' journey "over the gates/ Of locked up gardens and wild flower paths/ Of nests atop of chimney stacks" belongs on *Hats* – and the quiet gospel choir, too, on *The Foundations* recalls *Peace At Last*'s redemptive joy.

These, obviously, are compliments, because this often-uplifting intimacy can sometimes wind up bland, whereas Ross, like Buchanan, is endlessly compassionate, sharing place names like a familiar friend on *Still Walking* or recollections of his parents on *All Dressed Up*: "Me and my dad and a horse on the road".

On *I Was The Beatles*, as well, he takes another nostalgic trip back to his youth and its vital but unfulfilled romances.

Three songs will be known to fans, among them *I Am Born* from 2001's *Homesick* – though that song's "I once was unlovely and now I'm kissed" has never sounded sweeter – but *The Unpath*, provoked by Robert MacFarlane's *The Old Ways*, rightly declares: "I love the old ways/ But I like the unpath best". **Wyndham Wallace**

THE HOUSE OF LOVE
A STATE OF GRACE
CHERRY RED

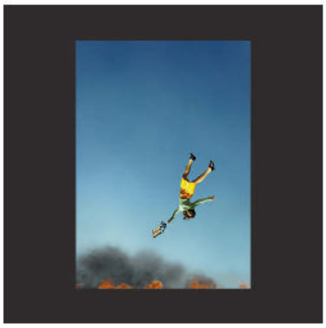
★★★½

Featuring a new Terry Bickers-less line-up instigated for a 30th anniversary US tour postponed by the pandemic, The House Of Love founder Guy Chadwick has used the time between lockdowns to nail down a solid set of songs for their seventh album. Opener *Sweet Loser* has a nicely somnambulant wooziness to it, while there's a hard rocking thump to the heavy riffing *Melody Rose* and *Clouds*. HoL's trademark dreaminess returns, though, for *Into The Laughter* and the chiming jangle pop *Queen Of Song* and *In My Mind*. Graceful indeed. **Steve Harnell**

TIM BURGESS
TYPICAL MUSIC
BELLA UNION

★★★

A national treasure for uniting music lovers with his Twitter Listening Parties during lockdown, The Charlatans singer somehow also found time to record this 22-song double album. Burgess insists he's avoided indulgence because he's "coloured everything in equally." True, yet potentially glorious pop symphonies are relatively undercooked. Meanwhile, the psychedelic third of this would suit lovers of Frank Zappa and Super Furries at their wonkiest, but those experiments get in the way for pop adherents. Great ideas, not necessarily handled at their best. **JE**



YEAH YEAH YEAHS
COOL IT DOWN
SECRETLY CANADIAN

★★★★

After nine years, the YYYs return with the follow-up to 2013's *Mosquito*. And, readers, it's ruddy marvellous. The Perfume Genius-featuring *Spitting Off The Edge Of The World* triumphantly opens proceedings with a wall of hazy, strafing guitar. There are more road-trip shoegaze tones on *Lovebomb*, plus spiky funk on *Fleez*, urgent warped soul on *Burning*, a bent-out-of-shape The Weeknd on the anthemic *Different Today* and spooksome spoken word on closer *Mars*. The trio's effortless elegance makes *Cool It Down* a triumph, well worth the near-decade wait. **IW**

EZRA FURMAN
ALL OF US FLAMES
BELLA UNION

★★★★

Best known for soundtracking smash Channel 4 sitcom *Sex Education*, Furman completes a trilogy with an album in stark contrast to its punky predecessor, *Twelve Nudes*. After the Johnny Cash-rocking country mood of opener *Train Comes Through*, Furman furthers her pop side. Previously best explored in 2015's breakthrough, *Perpetual Motion People*, Furman is even more sophisticated here. There are echoes of *Synchronicity*-era Police in the sleek *I Saw The Truth Undressing* and a 50s girl group drama to *Forever In Sunset* and *Lilac And Black*. A fiery ride. **JE**

© Getty

BLONDIE
AGAINST THE ODDS: 1974-1982

UMC/VIRGIN EMI

★★★★★

BLONDIE'S LONG-DELAYED BOXSET IS WELL WORTH THE WAIT (AND THE WEIGHT), REACHING BEYOND THE GOLDEN HITS TO SHOW HOW INVENTIVE THE NEW YORKERS REALLY WERE

Although *Parallel Lines* often features in lists of all-time classic albums, there's a perception around Blondie that, like Madness or Squeeze, they are more of a singles band. Blondie made iconic singles, but all you need is a hits compilation, because they were too dilettante to produce LPs worthy of those 45s.

The band aren't bothered by the notion: Chris Stein told *Classic Pop* that TikTok has helped show you can cut songs into 30-second chunks and still make great art, so who cares how long your best work is? The guitarist can afford to be magnanimous. He knows Blondie continue to create sublime records, with *Pollinator* one of this century's great pop LPs.

As for Blondie's first incarnation? This gargantuan 18lb boxset, arriving four years after it was first announced, perfectly shows the hard work behind the glamour. Surely Blondie couldn't look that cool *and* be one of New York's most industrious bands? They were. Suck it up. Alongside the original six albums are four LPs of rarities and an illuminating eight-song 10", *Out In The Streets*, comprising Blondie's earliest demos. It includes *The Disco Song*, a functionally titled early version of *Heart Of Glass*. Blondie had it going on from the start, and most bands would have revisited the catchy *Sexy Ida* or *The Thin Line*.

The band could afford to forget such potential gems. Their biggest skill – which critics were suspicious of – was enthusiasm for anything exciting. Under Richard Gottehrer's admittedly scrappy production, *Blondie* and *Plastic Letters* feature rock and roll, Wall Of Sound dramatics plus funk and disco, under the punk dynamic. Once Mike Chapman took over the reins as producer, the band had the discipline to hone their varied ideas. *Parallel Lines'* successor *Eat To The Beat* is just as thrilling, albeit edgier in its streamlined chaos.

Autoamerican might be even better than *Parallel Lines*, Blondie's futurism meeting their pop nous head on to result in a dazzlingly diverse album.

After dispersing for assorted solo LPs, by *The Hunter* even Blondie couldn't agree on what band they wanted to be anymore. Tellingly, there are few outtakes, but beyond its laughable artwork there's a handful of classic pop moments. One patchy album out of six isn't bad, and those rarities records – demos by the dozen, B-sides, unreleased songs – are excellent. There are two books, one telling Blondie's story in honest, punchy fashion, the other a discography guide with sleeves to die for. It comes as a 10LP or 8CD set, or with just the rarities on vinyl or CD for existing fans. As with Blondie's music, this box is how it should be done.

John Earls

ULTRAVOX
RAGE IN EDEN

CHRYSALIS

★★★★

© Brian Aris

After 2020's deluxe reissue of *Vienna*, Ultravox do a similarly thorough job with its follow-up. Released 14 months later, *Rage In Eden* wasn't a disaster, but didn't quite match *Vienna*'s success, charting one place lower at No.4 and only spawning two singles. The proto-rap of *The Thin Wall* and *The Voice*'s sturdy driving rock deserved better than to linger just outside the Top 10, but this was 1981, when chart space was at a premium for great singles.

Co-produced with Conny Plank once again, Ultravox's fifth album is probably their most straight-up commercial record. Not that *Rage In Eden* is compromised: far from it. However, chart stardom and knowing that Midge Ure was accepted by fans instilled a new confidence. There's a certainty to Ure's delivery and Warren Cann's drumming that makes *Accent On Youth* and *I Remember (Death In The Afternoon)* bold pop, rather than the murky art-rock a less cocksure band would have let them rest as. The closing *Your Name (Has Slipped My Mind Again)* is the nearest the album gets to Ultravox's prog beginnings, and even that's a banger.

The extras round up B-sides, single versions, the 12" of the already epic *I Never Wanted To Begin* and nine unreleased rehearsals and demos. Of particular interest are the two unnamed instrumentals which remained undeveloped: the pulsating *Untitled II* could have become a synth-pop gem. Steven Wilson's additional new album mix is reliably expansive from the king of surround reboots, and the 1981 Hammersmith Odeon concert across CDs four and five further shows Ultravox's imperial grandeur during the period.

Vinylists can choose between a 2LP set adding the B-sides, or a 4LP edition also including the Hammersmith show. The package's DVD, housing the original production masters and Wilson's mix, is audio-only, omitting any videos, TV performances or live footage. That's a minor quibble, set against an otherwise comprehensive document of a band deciding that they really rather enjoyed success and were happy to have more of it, on their own terms. **JE**

THE CURE
WISH

UMC/FICTION

★★★★½

© Alamy

Although it's got *Friday I'm In Love* on it, 1992's *Wish* wouldn't be many fans' guess as The Cure's best-selling album. Next to a cult classic like *Disintegration* or *Pornography*, the band's ninth LP has felt slightly neglected. It hasn't helped that it's been rather hard to find recently. Most Cure albums are freely available on vinyl, but *Wish* hadn't been re-pressed, waiting for Robert Smith to fix the mastering that he was too busy preparing for a tour to oversee during its original finishing stages.

Helped by mastering king Miles Showell, *Wish* now sounds more gorgeously shimmering than ever, and a fresh vinyl of the remastered album follows this 3CD set in November. As for the expanded CD/digital *Wish*? It's a curious beast: both its six B-sides and contemporaneous live LP *Paris* are absent, even though a fiery outtake of *End* from that concert is installed.

Before you harrumph, Smith's view is that those B-sides (via the *Join The Dots* compilation) and *Paris* are readily available. Instead, he wanted to showcase genuine rarities. Which means there are 24 unreleased songs: 14 (mostly instrumental) demos, plus 10 instrumental demos of unheard tracks. Who wouldn't trade easily findable B-sides for an album's worth of "new" tunes?

It would be wild to hear Smith add his voice to the beautiful *Abetabw* or for the *Why Can't I Be You*-style giddiness of *Miss Van Gogh* to be developed, but they're thrilling as they are, thanks. Obscure cassette-only EP *Lost Wishes* is here, too, as are six of Mark Saunders and Bryan "Chuck" New's competent-if-inessential extended mixes.

After the brilliant but brutal *Disintegration* three years earlier, The Cure reacted by going back to that album's predecessor *Kiss Me, Kiss Me, Kiss Me* for *Wish*'s spiritual inspiration. *Friday I'm In Love* and the abandoned *Doing The Unstuck* apart, the mood is defiance rather than joy, which is exemplified by live anthems *From The Edge Of The Deep Green Sea* and *End*, plus the unusually straight-up rock of *Cut*.

Among those rallying cries, there's pathos, too. Half the album is Smith at his most reflective and still, with *Apart* and *Trust* especially beautiful. It makes for a mini-greatest hits: without trying for commercial kudos, *Wish* is a wonderfully rounded pop record. In the absence of a super-duper deluxe 5CD+1DVD package, everyone's wishes are now fulfilled. **JE**

DURAN DURAN
MEDAZZALAND/POP TRASH/ASTRONAUT/ RED CARPET MASSACRE/ALL YOU NEED IS NOW

BMG

★★★★ / ★★★★★ / ★★★★★ / ★★★½ / ★★★

THE FIRST FRUITS OF DURAN DURAN'S BACK CATALOGUE FINDING A NEW HOME MEANS FANS GET A MUCH-NEEDED FRESH PERSPECTIVE ON THOSE OFT-OVERLOOKED YEARS

Last year's magnificent *Future Past* album was rightly heralded as classic Duran Duran. There was another reason to celebrate the band's first new LP in six years: signing to BMG meant their post-EMI catalogue was under the same imprint again.

Rio is 40 this year, but Duran are celebrating another anniversary as part of highlighting their criminally neglected era. Originally due its European release in 1997, their ninth album *Medazzaland* will finally be officially available physically in the UK in October for its 25th birthday. Now expanded with some of the bewildering array of remixes that accompanied its singles by the likes of Todd Terry and Paul Oakenfold, *Medazzaland* is a fabulous adventure from a band officially out of damns to give.

Admittedly, rotten covers LP *Thank You* having instantly torpedoed the goodwill built up by *'The Wedding Album'*, even John Taylor had had enough by 1997, leaving halfway through the *Medazzaland* sessions. With just Nick Rhodes and Simon Le Bon remaining of the founder members, Warren Cuccurullo continues his admirable heavy lifting, his guitar gliding gorgeously through *Come Undone*-worthy ballad *Who Do You Think You Are?* and matching Le Bon for exuberance on *Big Bang Generation.*

Undervalued producers TV Mania help to ensure that *Medazzaland*'s dance experiments still sound totally fresh, and its belated CD release is more worthwhile than simply reworking *Rio* again.

Similarly, Duran's subsequent four LPs are back in print on CD, with vinyl editions of all five albums expected early in 2023. The rest are extras-free, but it's worth revisiting *Pop Trash* for another unhinged trip into the wilderness, as Le Bon and Rhodes go full Colonel Kurtz while nobody was looking.

Of course, you want imperious grandiose pop from Duran, too, amply provided by original fivesome reunion album *Astronaut* in 2004. Rather than being hesitant in each other's presence, it's the sound of five people in love with pop music again, helped by Nile Rodgers once more.

It didn't last: one day, tantalising unreleased album *Reportage* will hopefully be finished with Andy Taylor. With luck, it'll prove more cohesive than post-Andy fallout document *Red Carpet Massacre.* It's not a outright disaster, but producers Timbaland, Justin Timberlake and Danja make Duran appear like any of their clients: faceless pop which already sounds more dated than *Duran Duran* ever will.

Ironically, uber fanboy Mark Ronson had the opposite problem helming *All You Need Is Now*, which feels in places like a Duran tribute album. When it's good – the riotous *Girl Panic!* and Ana Matronic duet *Safe* – it's fabulous, but Ronson lets his charges coast at times. *Paper Gods* fixed that. Meanwhile, here's your chance to finally complete Duran's physical side. **JE**

VARIOUS ARTISTS
NOW PRESENTS ELECTRONIC/NOW YEARBOOK '79/NOW YEARBOOK '80 EXTRA/NOW 12" 70s

NOW

★★★★½ / ★★★★★ / ★★★★½ / ★★★★★

The NOW brand continues doing righteous work with a host of fantastic selections guaranteed to woo yore-pop lovers. The latest batch is fizzing with temptations. First up, *NOW Presents Electronic* is a 5LP boxset rounding up 68 crackers featuring the obvious (*Blue Monday*, *Torch*, *Vienna*, *Quiet Life*) alongside showcasing material that doesn't usually get much of a look in (Laurie Anderson's *O Superman*, Duran's *The Chauffeur*, Human League's *Hard Times*, Donna Summer's *Working The Midnight Shift*). It has the vibe of a chum-compiled mixtape veering around the eras.

The unstoppable *NOW Yearbook* series moves back a year to 1979. It's 12 months when singles-buying was at its height, and it's not hard to see why with this 85-track 4CD (or 48-track 3LP) avalanche of aceness: *Hit Me With Your Rhythm Stick*, *I Don't Like Mondays*, *Heart Of Glass*, *Gangsters*, *Gimme! Gimme! Gimme!*, *Pop Muzik*, *Good Times*, *Silly Games* and more besides.

Also, as is NOW tradition, *Yearbook Extra* completes its 1980 trolley dash, with a 66-track 3CD round-up of, um, extras, with *Embarrassment*, *A Forest*, *I Got You*, *Living After Midnight*, *Give Me The Night*, *A Little More Love* and one of the rummest Top 5 hits ever, Sweet People's *Et Les Oiseaux Chantaient* among the treats. If you're not wooed by an album that contains Rush, St Winifred's School Choir, John Foxx, Change *and* Chas & Dave, then there's no hope for you.

Finally, let's all salute the magnificence of *NOW 12" 70s*. A 4CD riot of the extended format's early years, there's an array of some genuine first-time-on-CD exclusives such as Cliff Richard's *We Don't Talk Anymore*, Wings' *Goodnight Tonight*, Yvonne Elliman's *If I Can't Have You*, Meco's *Star Wars Theme* and Flying Lizards' *Money* among floorfilling belters including *Supernature* (Cerrone) *Native New Yorker* (Odyssey) and *Boogie Wonderland* (Earth, Wind & Fire) as well as buried gems like Dennis Parker's *Like An Eagle*. It's absolutely brilliant, so hats off to NOW. Again. **Ian Wade**

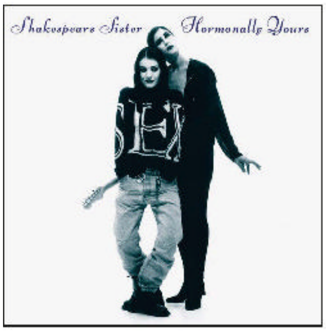
SHAKESPEARS SISTER
HORMONALLY YOURS

LONDON

★★★★

One of the more pleasing developments of recent years has been the welcome re-evaluation of Siobhan Fahey's post-Bananarama project, after many years of neglect. Fahey and Marcella Detroit reunited in 2019, toured the UK and released a brand new EP, getting the boxset treatment in 2020 with *Our History*.

The duo's second album, *Hormonally Yours* itself is overdue a celebratory separate reissue. A double-platinum seller that made Fahey and Detroit briefly huge, it brightened up what was a moribund year for pop. Certainly, there was no one quite doing what they were in 1992. Owing little to contemporary trends, *Hormonally Yours* veers between Stevie Wonder funk on *Are We In Love Yet* to knockabout pop (*I Don't Care*) via the full-on glam strut of *Catwoman*. Only *Black Sky*, with its *Fools Gold*-style drum sample, betrays its age in any way. And then there's *Stay*, the megahit that once possibly unbalanced the album, but which now sounds like its gloriously hammed-up gothic centrepiece.



Whatever style they turned their hands to, with their USP – that beautiful dovetailing of Siobhan and Marcy's voices – everything sounds unmistakably them. *Hormonally Yours* was the sound of two women with bags of ideas, a keen visual presence, wit, sequins and style. You have to wonder what they may have gone on to achieve, had they not fallen out so spectacularly in its aftermath.

All that said, this package may leave hardcore fans dissatisfied. The extras include three demos, only one of which (*The End*) is new. There's an added DVD of the brilliant Sophie Muller-directed videos that were such a crucial part of the album's campaign, alongside live versions from that 2019 reunion tour. But, given that both have already been included in *Our History*, if you've invested in that then you are unlikely to want duplicates. For everyone else, though, this is an opportunity to reacquaint yourself with one of the pinnacles of early-90s pop. **Will Simpson**

THE COMMUNARDS
RED

LONDON

★★★★

Continuing the exemplary chronicling of Jimmy Somerville and Richard Coles' unlikely partnership, The Communards' second and final album is as thorough as their self-titled reissue from 2021.

The B-sides of *Red* reveal an alternative world where they were cabaret stars: nearly all their flipsides have an air of Gershwin and Porter, either via covers or their own originals, especially the coquettish *I Just Want To Let You Know*. As its name implies, even pre-house banger *Scat* is buried in Somerville's best improv vocals under the Eiffel 65-style riffs.

Most of those B-sides and a trio of the of-their-time remixes are on the pleasingly substantial 2LP vinyl set. Demos and rough mixes additionally complement the 2CD package's extras.

And the parent album itself? Well, Somerville and Coles have said they were surprised by their debut's success, but you'd never guess.

Stephen Hague's co-production ensures most of the 10 songs are potential singles. *For A Friend*'s tribute to gay rights campaigner Mark Ashton is just as beautiful 35 years on, with *Lovers And Friends* similarly moving in its understated arrangement. When they wanted, The Communards could make campaigning sound like obvious mainstream fare, with *Victims* and the *Tomorrow* single galloping headrush pop.

In the public's mind, the *Red* era was all about *Never Can Say Goodbye*, of course. It still sounds mighty, and it gets an additional new version from Hot Chip spin-off The 2 Bears for their first remix since 2014. Unlike the epic new 7th Heaven reboot of *Don't Leave Me This Way* on the *Communards* reissue, Bears Joe Goddard and Raf Rundell don't add anything to the original in a disappointingly mundane return to remixes.

Like Somerville himself, The Communards' catalogue was small but perfectly formed. Realising they were unlikely to better *Red* commercially or artistically, with their differing personalities starting to strain, The Communards split soon after. They were culturally important, they made brilliant pop music. You can't ask for much more. **JE**

ALPHAVILLE
ETERNALLY YOURS

NEUE MEISTER/EDEL

★★★★

We can see your eyes rolling already. A 23-track compilation of Alphaville's greatest hits reworked with a full orchestra? Surely life's too short, and anyway didn't they only have one hit? Well, suspend your cynicism. Outside the UK, Marian Gold's synth-poppers were consistent hitmakers throughout the mid-80s. In their German homeland, Alphaville are as revered as our own Human League.

Moreover, it turns out that Alphaville's oeuvre is ideally suited to orchestration. If you know these songs already, well, the likes of *Sounds Like A Melody* and *Forever Young* are now even more dramatic and anguished than before.

Gold's supremely poised counter tenor glides over these songs like a swan landing on water. Deeply romantic, earnest and beautifully arranged – by Gold's co-conspirators on the project, Max Knoth and Christian Lohr – the nearest comparison point is a-ha. You're left to conclude that the presence of that Norwegian trio may have been one of the reasons that Gold and co failed to establish a bridgehead in the UK charts post-*Big In Japan*.

For those unfamiliar with their back catalogue, there's plenty here that will make you want to hunt down the original versions. That, if nothing else, more than justifies its existence. **WS**

SHEENA EASTON
LIVE AT THE PALACE, HOLLYWOOD

CHERRY POP

★★★★

Sheena Easton was to the 80s what Linda Ronstadt was to the 70s: a peerless vocal interpreter who found commercial success shapeshifting between pop, rock and country.

Live At The Palace, Hollywood, the latest release in a reissue campaign of Easton's EMI work, was recorded in 1982 during the Scottish vocalist's first American tour. Housed together here, the live CD and accompanying DVD (which originally aired as an HBO special) are a showcase for Easton's spunky stage presence and soft-rock smashes.

Hits like the disco-kissed *Modern Girl* and majestic Bond-theme ballad *For Your Eyes Only* retain their dramatic power. Easton sounds even more invested on a haunted, intimate version of *In The Winter* and a pair of covers that allow her to let loose: a twangy, barnstorming version of Joni Mitchell's *Raised On Robbery* and a faithful take on Elvin Bishop's *Fooled Around And Fell In Love*.

The audio CD includes five additional tracks initially omitted from the original release. Of these bonus cuts, a cover of Kiki Dee's 1981 hit *Star* is best, as Easton embraces the song's fame-cynical theme with gusto.

Make no mistake, however: *Live At The Palace, Hollywood* is a pristine time capsule of a newly-minted star strutting proudly into the spotlight.
Annie Zaleski

DAVID SYLVIAN
BLEMISH/MANAFON

UMC/SAMADHISOUND

★★★ / ★★★★★

Although there's no sign of David Sylvian ending his cessation of new music announced in 2018, he's engaging with his past in a manner that – for a notedly anti-nostalgia musician – is intriguing. Following the reissue of 00s collaborations compilation *Sleepwalkers*, Sylvian's two solo albums from the era are back on vinyl, negating the need to spend £200+ for original pressings.

Made during a difficult period, 2003's *Blemish* is especially brutal. Making Thom Yorke's solo albums resemble PWL-era Kylie at times, the contrast between Sylvian's croon and the sparse, jagged music can be thrilling: *The Heart Knows Better* is savage, like a David Peace novel set to music.

But *Blemish* can feel unrelentingly grim at times. For a more approachable entry to Sylvian's realm, *Manafon* is a better choice. Made with an array of improv musicians, they coalesce playfully, a musical conversation that's still galaxies away from Japan's pop but equally nourishing. "No common sense, no easy resting place," sings Sylvian in *The Rabbit Skinner*. True, *Manafon* isn't especially easy listening. But for anyone who remembers that Japan were never obvious pop stars, the approach Sylvian and his colleagues take here is one that rewards constantly over fresh listens. Whatever Sylvian offers next from his catalogue, a beauty – however punishing it initially appears – is likely to result. **JE**

TOYAH
ANTHEM

CHERRY RED

★★★★

Absurdly kept from the top spot by Starsound's *Stars On 45*, Toyah's third album marked her transformation from cult punk to chart revolutionary. With co-writer/guitarist Joel Bogen the only survivor from the band's previous incarnation, the new line-up did a brilliant job of maintaining the ferocity of old while ditching the more outré excesses for facing radio playlists head on. You'll know *It's A Mystery* and *I Want To Be Free*, with the pointed *Marionette* and *Pop Star* similarly unstoppable bursts of fire.

As ever, archivist Craig Astley is exemplary in unearthing extras. The regular *Anthem* is back on vinyl, there's a 2CD+DVD set or the boxset is a mighty 3CD, DVD, 2LP *and* a 7" of the *Flexipop* single *Sphinx* on proper vinyl. The box's second LP comprises everything from standalone single *Thunder In The Mountains*, though annoyingly the *Anthem* LP is a picture disc in the box. Bah.

Alongside a BBC six-song session, the highlight of the extras are a handful of unreleased instrumentals: why Toyah didn't turn *Dropped Earring* into a hit is, well, a mystery. Throw in Toyah causing havoc on the DVD's TV appearances and you get a fabulous document of an ex-punk rivalling Adam Ant for seizing their moment. **JE**

ROXY MUSIC
THE BEST OF

VIRGIN/UMC

★★★★½

For a band that were resolutely forward-thinking for much of their career, there's no little irony in the fact the tracklisting of this 18-song retrospective is arranged in reverse chronological order. It's an interesting conceit that sees Roxy morph from the slick 80s AOR of *Avalon*'s swoonsome title track all the way back to the strident art-rock of *Re-Make/Re-Model*. Immaculately produced, there's a quiet confidence to the understated elegance of *More Than This* and emotive John Lennon cover, *Jealous Guy*. Their influence on early Duran is most obvious on the propulsive groove of *Same Old Scene*, while *Oh Yeah* builds beautifully to a lilting chorus. At their midpoint, Roxy still had half an eye on the dancefloor, with *Angel Eyes* and the sultry *Love Is The Drug* driven by John Gustafson's iconic bassline – they could still cut some rug when of a mind to.

As the band smoothed over their rougher edges, it's pleasing to be reminded of earlier eccentricities on the likes of *Mother Of Pearl*, the high-octane *Street Life* and theatrical *Do The Strand*. And as debut singles go, few could match the impact of *Virginia Plain*.

Newly remastered to celebrate the band's 50th anniversary and accompanying reunion tour, this fine career overview – released on CD back in 2001 but now out on vinyl for the first time – captures all of Roxy's flavours, from quirky glam to slick, urbane rock icons. **Steve Harnell**

MATT BIANCO
THE ESSENTIAL: REIMAGINED, RELOVED

MATT ENTERTAINMENT

★★★

When Matt Bianco were at their peak in the mid-80s, they consisted of singer Mark Reilly, keyboardist Danny White, bassist Kito Poncioni and backing vocalist Basia Trzetrzelewska. As of 2022, only Reilly remains, so this 2CD Best Of promising remixes and re-recordings of 30 songs from their catalogue brings more to mind Marti Pellow's mind-blowingly redundant 2002 covers LP, *Marti Pellow Sings The Hits Of Wet Wet Wet & Smile*.

With the reimagined versions, more often than not it's those 80s production flourishes that have been scrubbed out. *More Than I Can Bear* jettisons the synths to instead receive a cocktail-jazz makeover, though *Yeh Yeh* is thankfully more faithful to their No.13-charting version of the Latin standard. Reilly has wisely resisted tinkering with Bianco's most famous number, so *Get Out Of Your Lazy Bed* is merely remastered, as is 1988's No.11 hit *Don't Blame It On That Girl*.

Some of the revisited tracks, however, offer an improvement: *Whose Side Are You On* feels less throwaway with its big-band facelift, while 1984's *Half A Minute* sounds pleasantly Sade'd.

The question is, who is this really for? A standard Best Of would satisfy fans, while this seems to be more of a vanity project from the last Matt standing. **Steve O'Brien**

Reviews

THE FINN BROTHERS
FINN
NEEDLE MYTHOLOGY

★★★★

Eschewing their usual Crowded House/Split Enz polish, Neil and Tim Finn's 1995 debut highlights their melodic prowess. The lyrics are less personal than usual, which doesn't prevent *Last Day Of June* being one of the most haunting songs either has written, nor *Kiss The Road Of Rarotonga* rocking hard. The Finns' writing has always delighted, and it's in its purest form here. A first vinyl release, *Finn* is housed with a 1990 demo LP of future Crowded House material. A similar job on their other album *Everyone Is Here* would be welcome. **JE**

THE BLUETONES
SUPERIOR QUALITY RECORDINGS 2003-2010
EDSEL

★★★½

With 2021's first volume compiling their commercial years, volume two is a tougher sell. Yet, artistically, 2006's self-titled album is as good as The Bluetones got: *My Neighbour's House* is one of the era's great lost singles, while 2003's *Luxembourg* has a bounce to rival their heyday. True, 2010's *A New Athens* is oddly formless, a lacklustre current finale from a band 12 years without new music. As before, volume two rounds up B-sides and rarities, adding two unreleased songs. All three are also out on vinyl. **JE**

BEASTIE BOYS
CHECK YOUR HEAD
UMC/VIRGIN EMI

★★★★

Arriving nearly three years after the Beastie Boys' critically lovebombed *Paul's Boutique*, *Check Your Head* would prove as different to their second LP as that one was to debut, *Licensed To Ill*. Less sample reliant, it ping-pongs between Lalo Schifrin-style hip-hop (*Funky Boss*), Blaxploitation instrumentals (*Pow*) and Black Flag punk (*Time For Livin'*), and includes one of their best singles in Jimi Hendrix love letter *Jimmy James*. This 30th anniversary vinyl boxset includes two extra LPs comprising remixes, live versions and B-sides. **SO**

PAULA ABDUL
FOREVER YOUR GIRL
MUSIC ON VINYL

★★★½

A choreographer for Janet Jackson and Duran Duran, Paula Abdul was hiding in plain sight as a star. Although it took over a year to top the US chart, Abdul's 1988 debut album provided four US No.1 singles. If Oliver Leiber's production has dated, L.A. & Babyface's *Knocked Out* remains a powerhouse and Glen Ballard's *State Of Attraction* highlighted how honed Abdul was once allowed near the studio, helped by her impressive vocals. Back on vinyl, it's a debut that often favoured polish over songcraft, but remains rather charming. **JE**

MADNESS
THE DANGERMEN SESSIONS VOLUME ONE
BMG

★★

Six years on from the correctly titled *Wonderful*, by 2005, Madness' second incarnation needed a new album. Having played secret gigs of covers as The Dangermen, they recorded their favourite reinterpretations. For a band who first succeeded by reworking Prince Buster, it's disappointingly thin. Lacking the usual wit and energy, they play it too straight and earnest. Despite Dennis Bovell co-producing, the rocksteady feel is one-paced, becoming a slog by a reggaefied *Lola*. Finally on vinyl, no wonder there's yet to be a volume two. **JE**

ARROW
HOT HOT HOT: THE VERY BEST OF ARROW
BMG

★★★½

Marking 40 years since calypso classic *Hot Hot Hot*, Montserrat's Arrow had been recording for more than a decade before that breakthrough. This 18-song CD/10-track LP shows Arrow, who died in 2010, was no one-hit wonder, with *O' La Soca* helping him to popularise soca. There's no sane reason why *Throw It Up* isn't as ubiquitous at parties as his smash, nor why *Long Time* can't get everyone dancing. If *Hot Hot Hot* had been his only single, he'd deserve acclaim, but this shows Arrow constantly hit the target. **JE**

PAUL WELLER
22 DREAMS
UMC/ISLAND

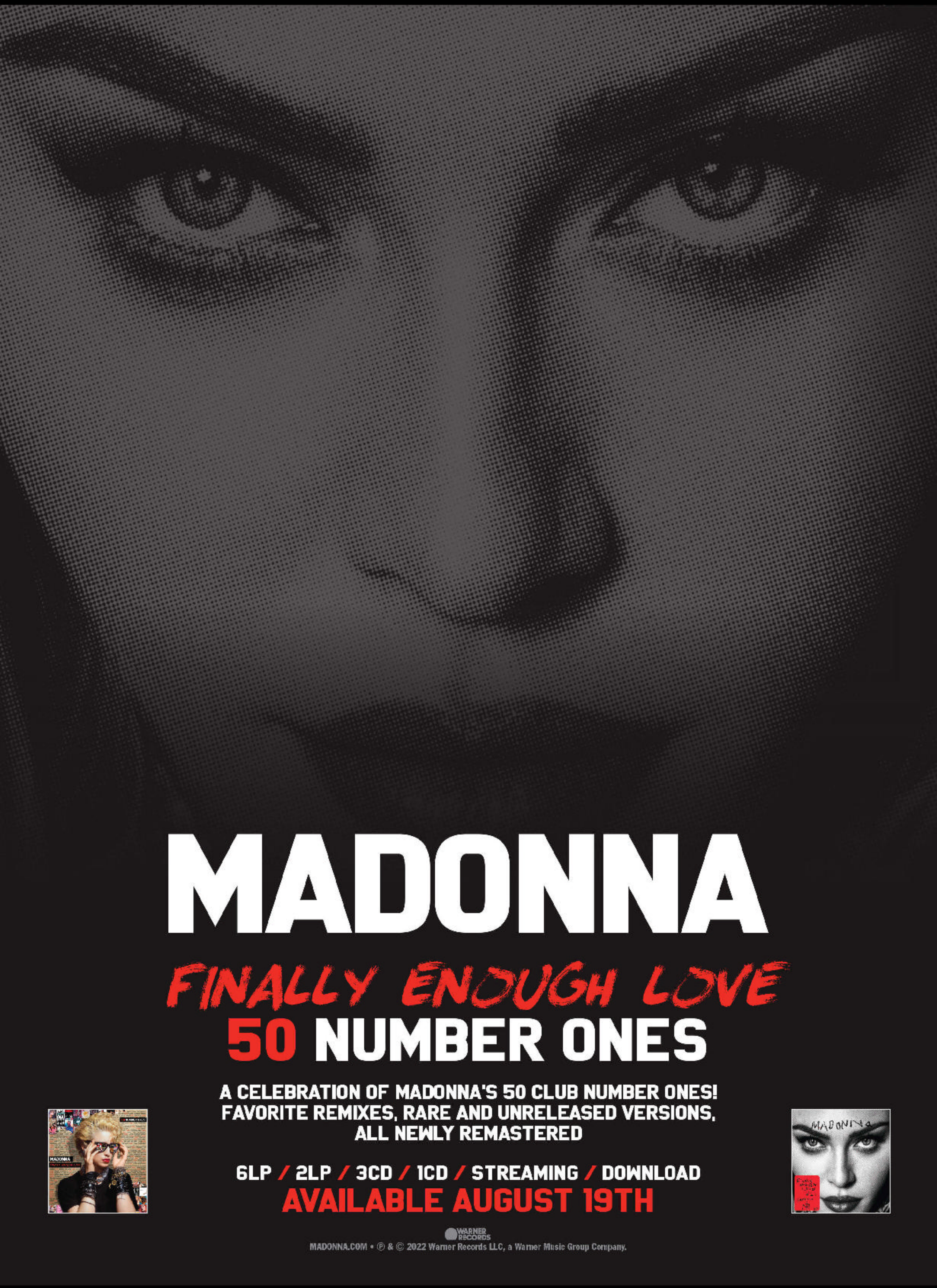
★★★★

Belatedly out on vinyl for the first time, Paul Weller's 2008 double album kickstarted the second phase of his solo career. Weller hasn't looked back since this magical landscape showed that he could throw together his most strutting rock, contemplative ballads, heartfelt folk and experimental krautrock on the same record and still make it all hang together perfectly. After the route-one assault of 2005's *As Is Now* got The Modfather back on the attack, these 21 adventurous songs have been the benchmark for a freeflowing career that has rarely faltered since. **JE**

SPACE
SPIDERS/TIN PLANET
DEMON

★★★★ / ★★★

After 2019's 6CD *Anthology* compiled the Liverpool Britpoppers' first 18 years, a new tour sees their first two albums back on vinyl. Debut *Spiders* from 1996 is a madcap whirlwind where *Mister Psycho* and *Lovechild Of The Queen* matched its hits *Female Of The Species* and *Neighbourhood* for exuberance. Two years on, *Tin Planet* was less rounded. There were more signs of filler, but Cerys Matthews duet *The Ballad Of Tom Jones* and the suave *Begin Again* made up for patchy sketches where humour came at the expense of a good tune. **JE**


MADONNA
FINALLY ENOUGH LOVE
50 NUMBER ONES
A CELEBRATION OF MADONNA'S 50 CLUB NUMBER ONES!
FAVORITE REMIXES, RARE AND UNRELEASED VERSIONS,
ALL NEWLY REMASTERED
6LP / 2LP / 3CD / 1CD / STREAMING / DOWNLOAD
AVAILABLE AUGUST 19TH
WARNER RECORDS
MADONNA.COM • ℗ & © 2022 Warner Records LLC, a Warner Music Group Company.

LET'S ROCK SHREWSBURY
QUARRY PARK, SHREWSBURY

16 JULY

★★★★

A RECORD-BREAKING HEATWAVE, A STUNNING SETTING AND A DIVERSE ASSORTMENT OF HITMAKERS – SHROPSHIRE HOSTS THE UK'S FINEST TOURING MINI-FESTIVAL

It's noon on the eve of what's predicted to be the hottest couple of days in the UK ever – there's not a cloud in the sky, and the queues for the water taps are already building up. But The Farm's Peter Hooton is nonplussed. "I don't know why people are saying there's a heatwave, it's cold enough for a coat," cries the over-dressed singer from the Let's Rock stage.

© Dave Freak

Hooton's clearly made of stronger stuff than the encamped capacity crowd, who are down to little more than Frankie Says... T-shirts plus a liberal plastering of Factor 50. Although halfway through their set – which includes solid renditions of *Groovy Train*, a Mick Jones-approved cover of The Clash's *Bank Robber* and *All Together Now* (dedicated to Happy Mondays' Paul Ryder, who sadly passed away the day before) – even Hooton admits defeat, removing his jacket.

First on, the band stand out in an altogether poppier line-up of chart stars and hitmakers, their baggy swagger pointing to the next decade's guitar revival. Yet, that is what's great about Let's Rock. Outside of the pages of *Classic Pop*, where else could you see Scritti Politti and their slick and well-sculptured artfulness playing alongside the still-portly Buster Bloodvessel and his Bad Manners?

However, not everything works. Tenpole Tudor struggle with both the jokey *Who Killed Bambi?* from *The Great Rock'N'Roll Swindle* and the anthemic *Swords Of A Thousand Men*, which is let down by an unsympathetic arrangement. And did Ottowan really need to play two versions of *D.I.S.C.O?*

Meanwhile, swift half-hour appearances from Fine Young Cannibals' intense Roland Gift and a swirling Belinda Carlisle – both accompanied by the Let's Rock house band, The Retrobates – are not long enough.

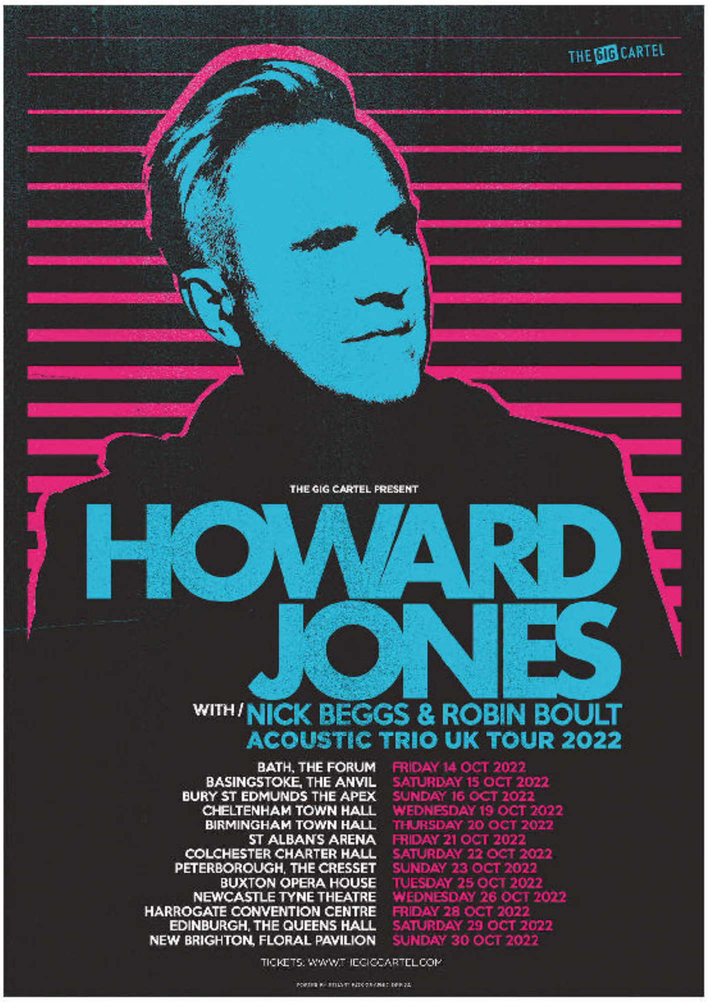
With a lengthier outing, Nick Heyward is quick to (rightly) declare it's a *Fantastic Day*, followed by a restless head mic-wearing Tom Bailey on next. Tom and his all-female band instantly win the audience over with strong versions of The Thompson Twins' *Love On Your Side*, *The Gap*, *Doctor! Doctor!* and ballad *Hold Me Now* (even if he does look like he's going to give a TED Talk).

When it comes to stagecraft, it's hard to beat Tony Hadley, whose voice barely needs any amplification. With a set that includes *Chant No.1* and *Gold* – complete with cheeky *007* guitar riff – his performance is exemplary: sophisticated and entertaining, pure showbiz.

After that belting 45 minutes, the bar is set for Billy Ocean, who oozes class with *Love Really Hurts Without You*, a revamp of *Get Outta My Dreams, Get Into My Car* that features an on-stage driving shuffle, *Red Light Spells Danger* and Bob Marley's *No Woman No Cry*.

Which all leads to headliners Wet Wet Wet. New(ish) frontman, former Liberty X-er Kevin Simm, impresses with a smoothly effortless performance, although founding bassist Graeme Clarke maintains a healthy presence in the spotlight that wraps up – to quote the aforementioned Heyward – another fantastic day. **Dave Freak**

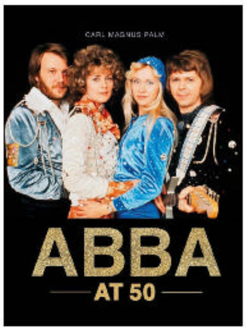
THEGIGCARTEL - WWW.THEGIGCARTEL.COM - 24 HOUR BOX OFFICE 0844 478 0898 - THEGIGCARTEL



ABBA AT 50
CARL MAGNUS PALM
PALAZZO EDITIONS

★★★

In the nigh-on 40-year gap between Abba's break-up and their unexpected comeback with *Voyage* in 2021, countless biographers have set out accounts of what happened between pop's 'fantastic four', yet it was Carl Magnus Palm who emerged as the pre-eminent authority on the group thanks to his exhaustive archive. *Bright Lights, Dark Shadows* is their definitive biography to date, while *Abba: The Complete Recording Sessions* is a deep dive into the technical side of the quartet's discography.



Therefore, when it comes to marking Abba's golden anniversary, nobody is better placed than Carl – *Abba At 50* is packed with hundreds of photos.

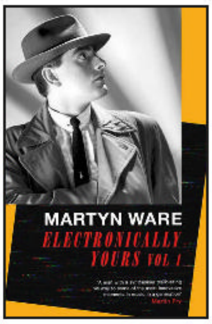
The story begins before the group's formation then progresses to each Abba studio album and solo endeavours. Palm also goes on to examine how Abba's legacy was kept alive by acts such as Erasure and the *Mamma Mia!* musical and films, culminating with the triumphant *Voyage* album and live extravaganza.

This beautifully presented book serves as a journey through Abba's music, but thanks to the countless photos, shines a spotlight on the best (and worst) of their unique style. More an illustrated history than an in-depth analysis, it rarely dives beneath the surface. But, as an introduction to new fans and a celebration for long-timers, *Abba At 50* offers enough to satisfy both camps. **Mark Lindores**

ELECTRONICALLY YOURS: VOL 1
MARTYN WARE
CONSTABLE

★★★★

As a founding member of both the Human League and Heaven 17, not to mention the hugely influential British Electric Foundation, Martyn Ware's position as a synth-pop founding father can't be overestimated. In *Electronically Yours*, the first instalment of his two-part autobiography, he reveals all about not only H17's era-defining classic albums *Penthouse And Pavement* and *The Luxury Gap*, but also delves into his illustrious career as a producer which saw him play a pivotal role in the success of other 80s behemoths including *Introducing The Hardline According To Terence Trent D'Arby* and Tina Turner's *Private Dancer*.



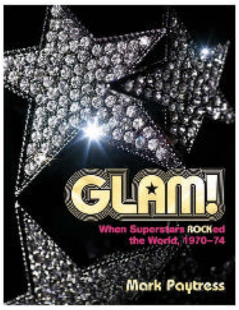
Written in Martin's typically candid and humorous voice, *Electronically Yours* details his formative years in Sheffield, his teenage friendship with Phil Oakey and the impactful music that association would go on to spawn. We get Ware's take on The Human League's split and his subsequent successes up to 1993. Frank, self-deprecating and often hilariously funny, the book strikes the balance between memoir and manual, thanks to a song-by-song breakdown of how his creations came into existence.

Punctuating the story with sidenotes on his favourite art, places and music, his passion for football and politics as well as songs and musicians that have influenced him, Ware also interjects reflections from other friends, artists and collaborators to form a concise portrait of one of pop music's most important mavericks. **ML**

GLAM! WHEN SUPERSTARS ROCKED THE WORLD, 1970-74
MARK PAYTRESS
OMNIBUS PRESS

★★★★½

At a time when pop stars are falling over themselves to assure us they're just like us, thanks to oversharing everything from mealtimes to their medical history on social media, *Glam!* is a glorious return to the days when plain old Noddy or Reg would don garish get-ups and morph into otherworldly beings for our entertainment.



This superb history of glam rock transports us back to the early 70s when pop titans Bowie, Bolan, Elton, Rod, Roxy, et al delivered blockbuster hits aplenty, packed with stomping beats and jaunty riffs to form one of the most misunderstood and unfairly maligned genres of music.

Well-researched and wonderfully recounted from hundreds of interviews with artists, photographers, designers and stylists, Paytress' prose brings the scene vividly to life as a beautifully designed and illustrated scrapbook of gig flyers, posters, record sleeves, memorabilia and magazines to celebrate glam's gaudy glory.

As is often the case when revisiting past eras through a 2022 lens, revisionism can be tricky when one of the genre's biggest successes masked utter depravity and – in this case – where all that glittered certainly wasn't gold. It's handled as well as it possibly can be given the circumstances and even the minimal mention of the spectre of glam rock can't spoil the party. A triumph. **ML**

BOWIE @ 75
MARTIN POPOFF
MOTORBOOKS

★★★½

In the six years since David Bowie's passing, it seems like barely a month passes without the publication of yet another new book, each promising to outdo the last. It does rather prompt the question of what else can be written at this point. The demand from Bowie's devoted fanbase remains constant, though, so the books keep on coming.

Bowie would have had his 75th birthday this January so Martin Popoff's premise here is to tell the star's story through 75 milestone life and career moments. As well as talking about his albums, notable tracks, films, performances and collaborations, *Bowie @ 75* also includes key dates from the singer's personal life.

As Popoff treads well-worn ground here and the format doesn't particularly lend itself to going into detail in any real depth (see also the *Abba At 50* book), *Bowie @ 75* doesn't overly reveal anything that fans won't already know. Casual admirers may glean the odd insight here and there or possibly achieve greater understanding of things given their context in Bowie's career – a timeline is a nice touch – but devoted followers will take very little away from this.

That said, the book does excel in its presentation. Pleasingly delivered in a slipcase with added extras of prints and posters, *Bowie @ 75* is lavishly illustrated throughout with live shots, record sleeve reproductions and portraits; a lovingly produced tribute. **ML**

Belinda Carlisle - Classic Pop 1/4 page.indd 1 05/08/2022 11:02

CLASSIC POP MOMENTS

KATE BUSH UNVEILS THE DREAMING

13 SEPTEMBER 1982

When Kate Bush released her fourth studio album in September 1982, it had been two years since her last effort, *Never For Ever.* While her first three long-players had seen the singer work alongside different producers, with *The Dreaming* she decided to take full creative control in the studio. More technically adventurous than her previous records, it's an album that's particularly fond of the Fairlight CMI. Its singles, with the exception of *Sat In Your Lap*, failed to make much of an impact, though (four 7"s – the title track as well as *There Goes A Tenner, Suspended In Gaffa* and *Night Of The Swallow* – missed the Top 40). The LP itself would peak at No.3 in the UK, two places down from the chart-topping *Never For Ever* and subsequent album *Hounds Of Love.* "The main thing I heard was 'uncommercial'," Bush told Radio 1 in 1984, "that's the label that the press, the record company put on it. But for an uncommercial record to go straight in at No.3 in the charts seems ironic to me." Despite EMI's misgivings, *The Dreaming* became the first Kate Bush album to enter the US chart, albeit at a lowly No.157 (*Hounds Of Love* would prove much more popular, hitting No.12). Critical reaction at the time was mixed, though the LP's reputation has grown in recent years with artists as diverse as Björk and Outkast's Big Boi lining up to sing its praises. **Steve O'Brien**

© Getty Images

NOW presents
electronic
5-LP Boxset / 19.08.22

NOW
THAT'S WHAT I CALL
12" 70s
4-CD / 02.09.22
ELTON JOHN, WINGS, BLONDIE, SPARKS, ROXY MUSIC, CHIC, DIANA ROSS
MECO, DONNA SUMMER, CHER, CLIFF RICHARD, AMII STEWART, BONEY M.
CERRONE, EARTH, WIND & FIRE WITH THE EMOTIONS, JAPAN, THE B-52'S

Squeeze

FOOD FOR THOUGHT TOUR 2022

WITH VERY SPECIAL GUEST

DR JOHN COOPER CLARKE (EXC 15 NOV)

FOOD FOR THOUGHT TOUR

FRI 28 OCTOBER	CAMBRIDGE CORN EXCHANGE
SAT 29 OCTOBER	OXFORD NEW THEATRE
MON 31 OCTOBER	GLASGOW ROYAL CONCERT HALL SOLD OUT
TUE 01 NOVEMBER	NEWCASTLE 02 CITY HALL
WED 02 NOVEMBER	HARROGATE CONVENTION CENTRE
FRI 04 NOVEMBER	SHEFFIELD CITY HALL
SAT 05 NOVEMBER	MANCHESTER 02 APOLLO
MON 07 NOVEMBER	LIVERPOOL PHILHARMONIC HALL SOLD OUT
TUE 08 NOVEMBER	LIVERPOOL PHILHARMONIC HALL
WED 09 NOVEMBER	EDINBURGH USHER HALL
FRI 11 NOVEMBER	NOTTINGHAM ROYAL CONCERT HALL
SAT 12 NOVEMBER	BIRMINGHAM SYMPHONY HALL
SUN 13 NOVEMBER	BIRMINGHAM SYMPHONY HALL
TUE 15 NOVEMBER	LLANDUDNO VENUE CYMRU THEATRE
THU 17NOVEMBER	SWANSEA ARENA
FRI 18 NOVEMBER	CARDIFF ST DAVID'S HALL
SAT 19 NOVEMBER	LONDON EVENTIM APOLLO
MON 21 NOVEMBER	SOUTHAMPTON 02 GUILDHALL
TUE 22 NOVEMBER	BATH FORUM
WED 23 NOVEMBER	TORQUAY PRINCESS THEATRE
THU 24 NOVEMBER	LONDON INDIGO AT THE 02 * EXTRA DATE ADDED
SAT 26 NOVEMBER	BRIGHTON CENTRE
SUN 27 NOVEMBER	BOURNEMOUTH PAVILION THEATRE
TUE 29 NOVEMBER	GUILDFORD G LIVE
WED 30 NOVEMBER	SOUTHEND CLIFFS PAVILION

* TICKETS ON SALE 10AM FRIDAY 26 AUGUST

In support of the trussell trust Stop UK Hunger

Help Musicians

GIGSANDTOURS.COM TICKETMASTER.CO.UK
SQUEEZEOFFICIAL.COM

AN SJM CONCERTS PRESENTATION BY ARRANGEMENT WITH UNITED TALENT AGENCY